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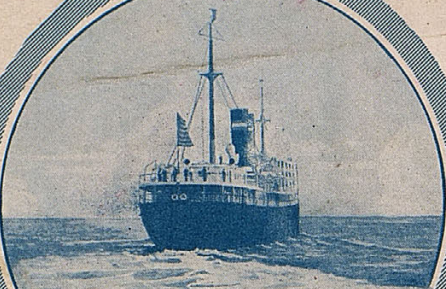
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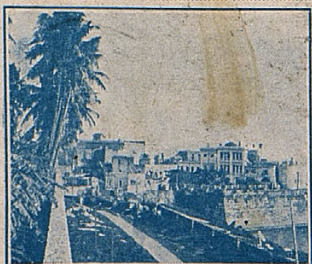
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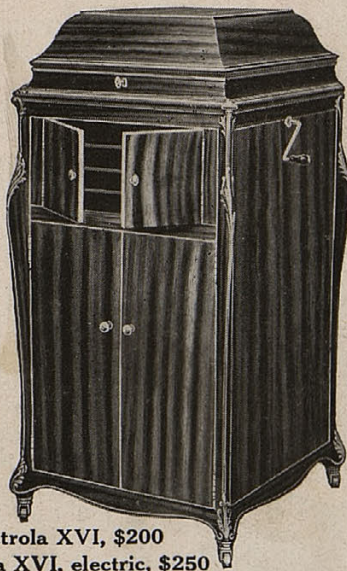
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The SMART SET

Edited by

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BURLESQUES, EPIGRAMS, POEMS, SHORT SATIRES, ETC.

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The SMART SET

Qui vit sans folie n'est pas si sage qu'il le croit.

LOVE'S AFTER-THOUGHTS

By Winthrop Parkhurst

I

BEFORE a woman is married she sincerely believes that love is the rarest thing in all the world. After she is married she is perfectly sure of it.

II

Marriage, of course, in the eyes of every woman at least, is the supreme and perfect culmination of true love. This means, in other words, that marriage is the real end of true love. Which, of course, is undeniable.

III

None of the world's great philosophers has ever married. This is an interesting little historical fact which may be verified in any public library; and as throwing some small gleam into that unfathomable abyss, matrimony, it cannot be said to be altogether worthless. Yet such a bald statement as the foregoing is clearly not detailed enough to satisfy the modern inquisitive mind. It is entirely true, of course, that none of

the world's great philosophers has ever married. But in spite of this it is also true that dozens of the world's great philosophers are married. The explanation of the apparent paradox lies naturally in the fact that such men became great philosophers immediately *after* they were married. They had to.

IV

The hidden depths of a woman's eyes have never yet been sounded. And they never will be. Fools are too afraid to try, and wise men are too busy.

V

There is a subtle and delicate reason for kisses coming only from the lips. That is where lies only come from, too.

VI

Really great and enduring friendships between men and women can be easily destroyed; and all the violent asseverations of the platonists to the con-

trary, the hard fact remains that more than one fine comradeship has been ruined by the merest trifle. More than one train has been thrown off the track by a pebble. Many a kiss has resulted in marriage.

VII

There are ten billion paradoxes of love. Perhaps the greatest and most baffling of them all is that the very thing which men are most desirous of stealing from a woman is that which they are also most desirous of her to possess.

VIII

There are precisely ten ways of getting a woman frantically to adore you. One way is to be beautiful, gay, charming, witty and wise. The other nine ways are known only to the woman.

IX

Up to a certain point a woman will trust you; beyond a certain point she will begin to suspect you; and then, when she can neither trust nor believe you, she will suddenly madly adore you.

X

A woman's tongue is her greatest friend and her greatest enemy. It is her greatest friend when she has something to say. And it is her greatest enemy when she says it.

XI

According to very good ecclesiastical authority, there is only one devil. Evidently the census-takers are all wrong when they state that the female population of the United States alone is 54,948,762.

XII

To judge by the tactics of some women, the only infallible way of finding out whether a man's heart is whole is by breaking it.

XIII

Probably the principal reason that so little is understood about most women lies directly in the fact that about most women there is so little to understand.

XIV

To be sure of love is, undoubtedly, very, very wonderful. But it is also a most terrific bore.

XV

Enfn. To be cynical about love or woman always means one of two things. It means either that you have never been in love, or it means that you have. . . .



DIOS MIO!

By E. M. Nelson

I WEEP. The world is very sad. I weep because my love has violet eyes and long black hair and slender shoulders and crimson lips and white soft arms and a silvery bubbling laugh and pearly teeth and delicate ankles and a perfect understanding and a handsome husband.

THE GOING WRONG OF SYLVIA-ANN

A STUDY IN INNOCENCE

By Frances Gregg

IT'S piquant, the resemblance there is between the naïve violence, the sweet shamelessness of innocence, and the calculated and adroit shamelessness of our ladies of the highway. There isn't, as a matter of fact, more than the turn of the wind's difference between them in their methods. I'll show you what I mean as I go on with my story. It is the freedom of each, of the one from the need of conventional safeguards of behaviour, of the other from all conventional safeguards of behaviour, that gives them this provocative something in common.

I don't want you to suppose when I say "innocence" that I mean the misbegotten offspring of prudery and smugness that went by that name in the Victorian days—that conscious inanity, that double-dyed cynical bluffing. What I mean, the kind of innocence that Sylvia-Ann had when I first saw her, was based first on ignorance, ignorance of the actual facts of life, and then on her vigorous, wide-eyed, boyish interest in life. She had all the creative vigour of a budding pear-tree, and she was as new, as fresh, as undefileable. What she was when those first white petals dropped you shall see.

In appearance, she was, in those days, a slender wand of a girl, with extraordinary smouldering power in her eyes, a power that had in it elements both mystic and magnetic. There was a dreaming wantonness of gesture, like the beating of young branches against the wind; a gay, earthly, foal-like awkwardness of motion, a delicious ungaugedness in everything that she did,

that suggested a being untried, and unmannered in the ways of life.

She was gay. And full of fearless fears. And, to a man of my taste, utterly irresistible. For I am rather by way of being a—well, I call myself, for want of a better word, a nymphagogue. There was, and is to me something exquisite in those slowly awakening glances, those amazed and tremulous advances upon passion, those sheathed gay approaches to the mate, and the half-reluctant recoils. I would have had infinite repetition of this pursuit of the nymph. And Sylvia-Ann was a nymph. Indeed, she had even something of the crying mouth and longish peaked chin of the Maenad.

I was visiting my aunt that year, the year I first saw Sylvia-Ann. I had not been in England for about five years. It had taken me that long in Paris to find out that I was not an artist. The day that I was sure of it I had a sudden longing for England and all the old familiar things. But after about a week there came the inevitable question: "I say, Aunt Annie, aren't there any nice girls here?"

"I don't properly know, Maury, I go out so little now. Of course there's little Sylvia-Ann, she must be about twenty now, she was a sweet little girl. I might have them up to tea. You'd be nice to them, wouldn't you, Maurice? They're very simple people."

"I'm always nice to people with young daughters," I teased her. "Which one of these simple parents named her?"

"Oh, they both did, poor dears! They

had their aspirations in their youth. They bought a harmonicon for their tiny drawing-room, and Mrs. Holland learned laboriously to pick out little tunes on it. And then they went one season to a German spa and came back with a German song, endless quaint wooden toys, and a little pink flaxen-haired baby."

"And the baby was Sylvia-Ann?"

"Yes, the baby was Sylvia-Ann."

"An 'adopted' of theirs?"

"Nobody knows. And they're the kind of people nobody would presume to ask. You *couldn't*. They would think it such a horribly suggestive question."

"I see. Had it been named when they got here?"

"No, that came after. The dear old vicar and I have laughed many times over that christening. I'm her god-mother, you know. Really, I believe I have that old letter from Mrs. Holland in my scrap-book still. I'll get it."

I don't believe in presentiments, but it's a fact that as I listened to my aunt's retreating footsteps my heart seemed to thicken, and I remembered a saying of my old nurse: "When a young man's breath comes short at a girl's name, it's a sign of a wedding." "I'll be damned if it is!" I promised myself.

"Here it is," my aunt's voice broke in upon my reflections. "Now listen to this, my dear:

"*Very Dear Madam and Friend:*

"*We return from our travels bringing with us a little daughter. We think of naming her Sylvia-Ann after that most charming song, 'Wo ist Sylvia saget an?' We are hoping that you will do us the honour of being her god-mother.'*

"And then it is signed by their two names. And below, with a little star to mark it, is their translation of the line from the German, a translation arrived at, as the vicar and I fancy, after much poring over dictionaries—"Why is Sylvia called Ann?" I suppose the insoluble mystery of that question and the theoretical mystery of their offspring worked together in their dear vague minds with the desire to have a

permanent memento of their trip. It was before the day of the picture post-card and the pocket kodak. Well, I'll get a note off to them by the late post—tea and dinner, I think, since they have some way to come."

II

It was when hearing their voices upon the lawn a few days later and knowing that I must join my aunt's already advancing figure to give them welcome, that I had again that strange quickening of the breath, quite as though I had been an unpractised boy going to a meeting with his first love instead of being a man well seasoned to amours by five years in the Latin Quarter.

I had a sense, as I stood at my aunt's elbow, as though the very elements were held in a tender abeyance for the presaging of something strange; a translucent and crystalline stillness seemed to enfold the unborn event. While I went through with the formal greeting of her parents I deliberately withheld myself from looking at the girl, and I knew with secret delight that she, too, held herself withdrawn.

My aunt put her hand upon my arm, drawing me forward, while her cool rippling voice formulated the usual platitudes. "My nephew is very, very anxious to meet you, Sylvia-Ann. He has been getting too lonely shut up here with an old woman." The girl turned to me . . .

Oh, my Sylvia-Ann, I would like to give you to the world as you looked then! . . . She was so still, so fair, so questioning, and so pure! I can't describe her. I remember her pale gold hair and the misted radiance of her great green eyes. She was very like that Venus of Botticelli. And was it only chance that her hand caught at the laces of her dress as that Venus clasps her sheathing hair? Behind her, the shadows hung more still and sharp, and I could see the long low stretches of marshland, and the sea draped over with mist and the pale sky. So for one

perfect instant we stood—an instant!—a year—an eternity—while the soul of Sylvia-Ann went through my body like wine, and through my soul with pain and terror and joy. But that instant was a marriage. We were for each other.

This will seem strange to you in the light of what followed.

My aunt's voice rippled itself to an end and I found myself walking down the grass-grown lane with its border of white hawthorn, Sylvia-Ann at my side. We were going to see the old bulwark, I believe. Nothing of the afternoon stands out very clearly. I remember I found some yellow sea-poppies to give her. We were late to tea, and were forgiven. And then we were late to dinner. My aunt's voice took on a sharp note at that. We must have seemed *young*—young in a way to accent their eternal loss to those three elder ones.

We talked all the afternoon. Do you know what we talked about? We talked about love. She had never been in love, she confided to me like a child sharing a secret. She listened, wide-eyed, while I talked of my love-affairs. Talked? I ranted, I raved, I went into wild excesses of imaginary adventure. I swaggered, ruffling my feathers, like a young cock courting his mate. And I overdid it. I was talking some wild nonsense about women whom I—I—had "saved from themselves." "And they thanked me for it afterwards," was the phrase at which her expression brought my chastened tongue to a standstill. She simply didn't understand. But she answered me with the still gravity that I was to learn was characteristic of all her speeches.

"I," she said, "would never thank you for not giving me anything that I had asked for."

Brave little Sylvia-Ann! Though Life gave you in one sharp cruel blow all that you had asked, you would have been the first to cry out against the holding back of the smiting hand!

But what it was for the denying of which these mythical ladies were grate-

ful she knew no more than the newly created Eve.

After that we sat on the top of a gate and played with a month-old calf.

I felt an electric stir of irritation run through our elders as the rosy bright-eyed Sylvia-Ann hurried to her empty place at the dinner table.

"Well, you two seem to have got on admirably together. What have you been doing?" There was an almost challenging note in my aunt's voice.

Sylvia-Ann looked up like a child startled out of a dream, gazing meditatively before her as though not quite sure what she *had* been doing. Then at last she spoke.

"We played with a calf," she said. "Your nephew told me the chocolate spots would come off on my fingers."

There was a moment of dead silence at the table. Then my aunt responded:

"I suppose we all could have played with that delightful calf if we had been there."

It was a catty response, but I suppose it must have seemed like that. Even to the kindest listener—and to do my aunt justice, she was a really kindly person: but to *anybody* Sylvia-Ann's reply must have seemed like the most brazen impudence. It seemed redolent of the things that she withheld.

Sylvia-Ann herself looked with wide clear, candid eyes at my aunt, questioning her meaning, and I noticed that my aunt's eyes fell before this childish gaze, and she had, I fancy, dear, gentle, stainless creature, a moment of soiling doubt that she had responded coarsely. There was, I was to find out, something about Sylvia-Ann that inspired brutality. I think it was that her phenomenal innocence so threw even normal sophistication into a sharp relief that it took on the colour of grossness. She hurt one's self-love. One grows trivial with increasing age and soul-weariness, but Sylvia-Ann still had the appalling gravity of children, and that, too, tempted one toward ribaldry; that blank sincerity of hers was so cruel a rebuke of our lost innocence.

I am ashamed to say that I have left out the one marring incident of that afternoon, and the one that illustrates just what I have been saying. I'll put it in here, and from now on I will not spare myself. At the very beginning of our walk Sylvia-Ann had said some of the usual things about wanting me to interpret the landscape for her, that I had the eye of the artist while she had only the normal vision. Now, I had been having that sort of thing said to me by very sophisticated ladies as a prelude to a flirtation for a half a dozen years. Of course one might have thought that, so soon after the emotional exultation of the meeting, I would have been more sensitive to inflection of voice, to those straight-glancing eyes, but on the contrary I felt that I had been cheated by a most practised flirt, and I responded with as bald an intonation as I had ever used on the boulevard: "Rather gross flattery, what, my dear!"

Sylvia-Ann didn't respond, she didn't even look up, her head drooped forward the more, and her cheeks paled. I don't know what she thought. As a matter of fact, in those days, I think she only realized through her emotions. To think, you have to have past experiences with which to relate new experiences, to weigh and judge. She knew she was hurt, had been struck, but how and why were beyond her understanding.

It was some time before she recovered. I had to woo her back to security with little commonplace questions, ever so gently put. I don't think she was conscious of not answering me, I think she was literally stricken dumb with amazement. When she did recover, it was to return to her first confidence like a trusting child. I used to wonder at that time what became of her experiences, so often she would show no sign of remembering them, but later I decided that, just like an intelligent child, she remembered them with extraordinary clearness, but that they were relegated to some closed chamber of her brain till she had more material

with which to relate them; that, as a matter of fact, a great many things didn't happen to her till several years after the actual material event, that is, till she had become sufficiently conscious through sophistication to understand them.

It was my aunt who suggested that Sylvia-Ann walk home to show me the moon rising over the sand dunes. It was her way of reparation, of exonerating Sylvia from her momentary suspicion.

The moon swung slowly upward, and cast a golden band over the flaccid breast of the ocean, and went slowly higher, and waned and grew faint; and it was then, when she stood at last silver, that Sylvia-Ann came to my arms. Her lips were fresh as newly-opened petals. As mine closed upon them it seemed to me that the earth rocked and the stars swung in their courses, and that this girl's body that clung so closely upon mine must be fused and blended with me by the fierce flame of my ecstasy.

At last she drew gently away, pressing me back. I could feel her little hands through the thin silk of my shirt. There was something infinitely pathetic about the grave still face she had turned up to me, with the little drooping mouth and the quaint pucker of the eyebrows. She was so obviously overweighted with emotion that I began gently to help her, to explain to her as one might to a child.

"It's the way people make love, Sylvia-Ann," I was saying as we walked on. "You were very brave."

And indeed I had almost a sense of her being a double personality. There was that wonderful creature, that blend of courage and flame whose lips had answered my lips, and then there was this woebegone child whom I was reassuring.

She turned now and again, looking upward to study my face as though seeking some confirmation in it, till at last I turned full to the moonlight.

"Look at me, dear," I soothed her. "This is a new thing, but there is noth-

ing evil in it. You liked it, didn't you? It was beautiful. Perhaps you thought you would find the face of a Fool, of a Jester? It was not wantonly done. Sylvia-Ann, look at me."

She was not reassured. She was wiser than I. The antennæ of her instincts already throbbed in the future.

I have laughed sometimes, looking back, at my own folly. It must have been a strange face that I showed her. The moment had been beautiful—but it had also had its horror. She was innocent, but you must remember that I was not. And if the struggle between my natural emotion and my ecstatic exaltation had been overwhelmingly in favour of the latter, it was still at the cost of a face drawn and twisted with the nervous tension.

At her gateway we stood quietly a moment, the scent from the blossoming pear-trees folding about us. I did not ease her with any demonstration, but I whispered, with a thought for the gabled windows just over our heads: "You'll write to me if you want me to come again?"

Her face paled, looking so small in the moonlight, still drooped as she assented. And then, unexpectedly, her slender figure straightened, she looked steadily at me with brave still eyes. "Thank you—whatever comes!" she said, and turning swiftly, disappeared under the overhanging white-flowering branches.

And I walked home doubting her! It is astonishing to me now, but I did. I had known her four hours. Could any nice girl do the things she had done, and say the things she had said, to a man she had known such a short time? Had I ever been treated so? Oh, yes, I had made a bally fool of myself with my inveterate tendency to poetic fervour! And probably the little cat was laughing at the exhibition I had made.

In short, I ran the gamut of insane and silly suspicions. I had not then formulated the theory that sophistication and innocence have the same expression and differ only in spirit.

III

I SWUNG like a weather-vane through my four emotional points of the compass in the two weeks in which I did not hear from her. Faith—Fury—Desire—Indifference—Indifference—Fury—Faith—Desire—and so it went. And then came a little letter from her:

"Come now when you like. I had to be quiet and think about it all a little, but now I should like you to come. Sylvia-Ann Holland."

My answer was to telegraph: "This evening."

I don't know what I expected when I went to her, but I am sure that there was no fantastic possibility for the evening's dénouement that I did not touch upon in my thoughts as I walked over. But I think I was fairer to her, on the whole, than when I had left her. For one thing I knew more about her. I had tormented my aunt with questions.

The things one's aunt remembers! The prize Sylvia-Ann had got from her music-teacher—how beautifully she could darn stockings when she was still quite tiny—the sweet way she used to recite the poems of the immortal Crabbe, our famous local poet—my aunt's memory was excellent—for such things as these.

"But look here, my dear Aunt Annie, what I want to know is has she ever had any lovers—admirers, you know?"

"My dear Maury! But Sylvia-Ann is a baby!"

"Oh, d—" But I checked myself in time and framed my observation to a more aunt-like mould. "Quite so," I murmured, "but babes of twenty have been known to have admirers."

"But, my dear,"—my aunt was gentle—"in Suffolk we don't think it's quite nice to talk about a young girl's admirers. Perhaps in Paris they don't feel like that."

"No, in Paris they're a shade less reticent. I'm afraid I've been a bit corrupted by living there—only, of course, corrupted from my 'niceness'—for it does seem to me extreme—just between

us two—it isn't as though you were talking that way to a stranger—"

"Well—" my aunt hung poised before heaven knows what vision of the vulgarly garrulous — "well — there *was* a young man—a young literary man—he certainly thought Sylvia-Ann very charming. I remember he particularly spoke of her hair—'like the pale gold dust of Egyptian tombs,' he said. I thought it was a very extraordinary allusion—'dust'—and 'tombs'—but I suppose it meant something to him. There was no doubt he admired her very sincerely. Her mother was so pleased. I repeated it all to her in confidence—of course, we never let it come to Sylvia-Ann's ears."

"Oh, that sort of thing. I didn't mean that. Hasn't Sylvia-Ann herself—"

"Now, my dear Maury," she protested, "I do really. And besides you are too young to think of marrying. How old are you exactly?" My aunt fled from her dangerous defiance with the last placating question.

"You know quite well how old I am, Aunt Annie. I'm twenty-six. Two years younger than your dear nephew William. And I haven't the slightest thought of marrying."

"Well." My aunt rose with dignity. "I hope no nephew of mine would trifle with a young girl's affections."

"Young girls don't have affections, they have curiosities," I threw after my aunt's retreating figure. "And in Paris we don't think it's nice to associate the word 'trifle' with a young girl."

Certainly after a fortnight's badgering of Aunt Annie I felt reasonably sure that Sylvia-Ann had never had a lover—as though those flawless lips and unveiled eyes should not have been in themselves warrant enough. Her greeting, too, as she met me at the door of the little thatched house, had in it no slightest trace of self-consciousness. "Art or artlessness?" still sounded insistently through my brain. Indeed this suspicion of Sylvia-Ann had become an obsession with me. I realize now that it was a symbolic struggle, this wrest-

ling of our two spirits. I had been "corrupted" in Paris in a very different sense from that which I had asserted to my aunt, and I resented this peremptory hauling of me back to Paradise.

IV

"WOULD you like to come into my room, my own room? My study, I call it, though I haven't many books," Sylvia-Ann asked shyly.

The room she led me into was distinctly charming. It was a low, long room with a lattice window at the end that opened out to the dim night and the sound of the sea. The grayish-green distempered walls were a background for two or three uncertain little watercolour sketches—done by some young hand very tight upon its brushes, Sylvia-Ann's own, I surmised—in narrow gold frames. They were a background, too, for my own golden-haired Sylvia-Ann. There was an open fire—some bits of driftwood with little whispering coloured tongues of flame, and a great white settle near.

There were one or two low white chairs, a shelf of books, and at the other end of the room near the window was a square white table. A black straight vase that held a sheaf of the white pear-blossoms stood directly in front of a lamp burning on this table so that the light filtered through the leaves and petals. This twilight shadowy gloom in the room gave to the slender figure of Sylvia-Ann an elusive and ephemeral effect that was, I thought, intended.

The first words that I said in Sylvia-Ann's room—her "own room"—were: "Admirably arranged, my dear," with an insulting intonation. If it were possible to spatter my pale arm-lily I meant to do it. But it wasn't possible. This time she hardly winced. It was obvious that she had adjusted herself to the possibility of my treating her in this way—rather nervously adjusted herself, but she was prepared. And I saw her so far beyond the range of my shot that I never tried it again.

I flung myself sulkily into a corner of the settle opposite to where she sat in one of the low chairs—so lovely that it was almost pain to look at her. She wore a wide-skirted blue frock, something of the dim colour of the night, embroidered all about the feet and about the open throat with great white flowers. Her only ornament was a string of gold beads that cut across the tender hollow of her neck, so that I could not help but think how a lover would have to lift the heavy trinket up to kiss her just there. All her limbs were childishly fashioned: her little hands and slender arms gleamed against the opaque colour of her dress. At last her very sweetness penetrated my dull brain, driving back all my heavy clotted thoughts. And I could no longer control my desire to woo her.

She was wearing childish black-strapped slippers. I went and knelt near enough to touch them, and then even dared to put my lips to one of the little high-arched white-clad insteps. That parted her lips in a low ripple of laughter. She watched me like a child infinitely diverted. I wondered what love-phrases I had ever made that were suited to this amused child before me. At last I touched her dress and the heavy gold beads, and whispered unconnected picture words to her—"white flowers"—"stars"—

At that, with a motion as swift and as certain as the flight of a bird she came into my arms. I lifted her up and carried her to the corner of the settle. There was a delicious shock in the suddenness with which this had come about, but at the same time I quarrelled with it. That it was naïve and violent, and suggested a more sophisticated abruptness was exactly what should have deliciously thrilled me—but I wanted some greater assurance that it was naïve. Then her lips were on mine, and I gave myself up to the sheer joy of her. They were, and continued to be my assurance.

There never were such lips as Sylvia-Ann's — so sensitive, so fragrant, so cool. To linger upon them until their

little quiverings were known to my lips, to take her little head between my hands and bend it back to study the sheathed lines of those folded petals was to be reborn into the bliss of the Garden of Eden. Their chastity seemed so fragile and yet so secure.

She was still so passionless that if she thought of something that she wanted to tell me, her lips would part for the beginning of the word while they were still upon mine. They did so now.

"You haven't looked at my books," she said. "I wanted to show them to you. They explain why I wanted to make love to you."

Why *she* wanted to make love to *me*! "Look!" she exclaimed, running her finger along the titles.

Every one of those books was of a religious character.

"These are the only books I have," she went on. "My father gives them to me for my birthdays. Of course I had my school books, and there was a little about love in the poetry, but never enough, and once all of one French story was about some lovers. I liked that." She paused for a reflective moment. "But this is what I wanted to show you."

She drew from behind the other books a much thumbed volume. "The Adventures of Aristid Pujol," I read on the cover, wondering how those gay inimitable stories had found their way to that conventual bookshelf.

"You see, this year"—Sylvia-Ann was exultant—"my father made a mistake. He never reads the books that he gives to me, and he thought this one was about a missionary! After I read that book the sun seemed brighter, and the grass greener, and the sky bluer, and I was sure, *sure*, that I was very soon going to meet my lover—and then you came. I am glad that you are so very beautiful."

The contented sigh that accompanied this last was too much for me, and I broke into a shout of laughter. She watched me, pleased that I was amused, but not at all knowing why.

"Some day"—she clasped her two little hands under her chin—"when I know more about being in love, I shall go to Paris where all the people are gay, and where there are always lovers, and I shall love and love and love till all the sun that has ever shone upon me, and all the winds from the sea that have blown about me, and all the flowers, even the yellow poppies that you gave me, will have been drained out of my heart and mind, I shall have loved so hard, and then I shall come back and live happily ever after with my parents."

This was the longest speech that I had ever heard Sylvia-Ann make, and I listened to it as I would have listened to the prattle of a child! I came gradually to the conclusion that she really had never learned how to talk beyond the conventional formula of domestic conversation. She was entirely unembarrassed by silence—a curious enough phenomenon in our chattering age—and she gave always the impression of apprehending things through her emotions as a butterfly through its antennae.

Sometimes, after a mischievous tirade of mine designed for her bewilderment, the blind, unintelligent little face that she would turn up to me, with the puckered eyebrows and the troubled little drooping mouth, gave me an almost overwhelming impulse to catch her close and press back those soft red lips with a kiss. I never did. It seemed to me infinitely more diverting to follow *her* lead: to watch her little experiments.

What a grotesque little lover she was! It was so obvious that she didn't know what to do. Often she sat crouched, facing me on the settle, her sober little face with those frowning young eyebrows—so quaintly different from any other girl in her position. She had not the slightest instinct towards amorously attracting me. Her greatest daring was to put shy and awkward arms about my neck, tentatively begging kisses. Then she would draw back, intent upon the expression of my face, as though she might read from it

some hint of the mystery that teased her. Caresses brought a strange listening look to her face. I wondered what faint atavistic echoes of human joys assailed her. Any momentary onslaught of emotion on my part left her breathless, and with so grave and sweet a wonder that she was more than ever like those strange sinless Goddesses of Love of Botticelli.

V

For the time that the fruit trees were in blossom our idyll ran its untroubled course. Then the dear simple parents of Sylvia-Ann suddenly awoke to the fact that their "little girl" had a possible suitor, and they hovered and fluttered like two silly old birds over a nest of young. I had no intention of marrying. Then, too, about this time, I fell into a violent flirtation with a very sophisticated young neighbour, a young woman whom my aunt did not invite to tea; and I went to Sylvia-Ann only too often in a melancholic state of mental fatigue. In this frame of mind I fretted at Sylvia-Ann. I was impatient of her shy reticences, of her timid and awkward advances, of her inexperienced assuaging of my irritation. Why didn't she know that a woman controls a man by an assault upon his emotions?

"You not only lack the wit of your sex, Sylvia-Ann," I broke out upon her at last, "but you are spiritually gauche! Don't you know what it means to be seductive—you—you—" And for the first time I broke my resolve and caught her to me—"Don't you understand?" I demanded. "Can't you—don't you?"

She put her two little hands upon my breast, as that first night, and looked wondering up at me.

"What am I to understand?" she appealed. "I do wish you would tell me."

"Well, I won't," I replied bluntly. "Somebody else can take the responsibility of your instruction. I cease to be an experiment from this moment. I'm going back to Paris. It was a mistake ever to have left. I *am* an artist;

no one but an artist would get himself let in for a thing like this."

"Are you going?—you are not going really?" Sylvia-Ann faltered.

"That's just like a woman," I stormed. "I suppose you'd like this affair to drivel off into a saccharine platonic friendship. It has to stop now, or go on—and I am not going on!"

Her face had a sick white look that made my heart go heavily. And then she annoyed me by suddenly intoning, with a curious flat sound, as though it were an afterthought: "Oh, my God." I seized upon this as a legitimate excuse to turn away from her appealing eyes. I strongly felt the need of self-justification.

"After all, you're just like all women, Sylvia-Ann; any one of you will run a mile for the chance of a little heroics. No man would use a silly trite phrase like that. You know it didn't mean anything to you, really, did it?"

"No," she responded unexpectedly. "But they do use it in books, don't they? I thought I would try it—I thought maybe I would know better what it is that I feel—I don't think it's a very useful phrase. I—" She caught in her quivering lower lip until it was still—"I *shall* miss you."

Her hands were on my shoulders, but I could not bear the stricken, older look of the face that had been so eager, with an expression so swift and clear and youthful.

"It can't be helped, Sylvia-Ann," I pleaded, "I've got to go. Be a good child—say good-bye, dear."

"Oh—good-bye." She spoke steadily, and then with a swift little motion she kissed me full upon the lips. It was the first kiss she had given quite of her own accord. "I"—she held me still one torturing moment more—"I don't think—I don't *think* I am in love with you—but I *do* love you."

VI

It was almost a year later, in Paris, that I heard unexpectedly from my aunt. We are not a letter-writing fam-

ily—births and deaths, marriages, if they are a credit to the family, but outside of that we telegraph. So the letter held unread in my hand promised little mystery. It was annoying. One's family did die and marry and get themselves born, and, all in due time, one would see these events recorded in *The Times*—so why write? It was a point of view that I could not impress upon my aunt.

At last I tucked the still unopened envelope into the little inner pocket of my student's cape. I would read it that afternoon over the Vermouth I had substituted for my English afternoon tea. Better still, I'd meet my brother at his café, and, as my aunt would undoubtedly have written to us both, and as his wife would have read the letter—well, I felt that I had successfully dealt with what had promised to be an annoying incident in my harmonious days.

I drew my easel out from the wall with a glance of content about my studio. It was untidy. There was a disposal and a remissness of unexpected articles that gave my bachelor's eye comfort. Even the early spring rain that pirouetted upon my skylights added to my sense of well-being.

I had changed in the year that had passed. I had come back from England with a hardening of purpose, with a vindictive sharpening of my self-inspection. I was bound that I would see what I had in me. Everything went down on my canvas, every banality, sentimentality, ineptitude and feebleness that was in me. It was a slow and painful sloughing of my vanity. But I was finding myself. What I painted now was of the very essence and vigour of my chemical composition, it was as inevitably unlike the work of my neighbour as the shape of my nose was unlike that of my neighbour. And beyond this sheer organic expression I was coming to an understanding of a new idealism, a right to a more abstract expression.

Women I had relegated to the background. There was no romance that

could bear the test of my romance with Sylvia-Ann. I was beginning to understand, as far, I suppose as any man ever understands a woman, that last "I do love you" of hers. My heart still tightened at the echo of those earnest little analyzings of her emotions.

I had been infinitely touched by her last faltered avowal, and quaint disavowal, though unmoved from my purpose. And I had not allowed myself to feel too much at the time. With that singular guarding of oneself from the insurgence of direct emotions, I had substituted another conflict for my own more personal one—a conflict with my aunt.

"Well, I'm off tomorrow, Aunt Annie," had been my opening shot. And then there had begun one of those veiled but savage domestic struggles: my aunt for the fulfilment of her romantic sentimentalizings, I for my freedom.

"How nice that will be for dear little Sylvia-Ann! She'll love getting letters from you."

"My dear Aunt Annie, what do you mean? Why, you and I, even, don't write to each other, let alone to comparative strangers."

It was annoying that that unopened letter in my pocket should have recalled those almost forgotten warrings. I sometimes wondered what veiled indications of speech had taken place between my Aunt Annie and Sylvia-Ann's parents.

VII

I WAS glad to see my brother and his wife already in their corner, as I threaded my way through the clustered tables on the wide pavement. He looked very fair and Saxon among those chattering little dark men. It always pleased me to see him and Yvonne together. He, with his yellow poll shining in the afternoon sun, and his long legs wound grotesquely round the iron intricacies of his chair, so beautifully set off the roundness and brownness and compactness of his little French wife. I had had a hand in the making of that mar-

riage, and the results pleased me well.

"Hallo, old dear!" my brother Billy hailed me, "Vermouth? Or a pinky syrup through a straw?"

Yvonne greeted me with a glance such as only a French woman can give—a glance exhilaratingly feminine.

"Aunt Annie written to you?" I queried as I sat down.

"Not since dear Harold, second cousin of my Aunt Annie's sister's husband's brother, died."

"Oh, confound it," I muttered fretfully, "I suppose I'll have to read this damn thing, then. How many more of our grandfather's sainted offspring's offspring are there?"

"My dear Maury," I read in my aunt's fine, tremulous hand—and then the rest of that scant page hurled itself into my consciousness: "Sylvia-Ann has disappeared. We think she has gone to Paris. I have persuaded her parents to wait until I communicate with you before they go to find her. They are very old and broken."

"My dear Maury, my dear boy, I have tried to stand in the place of the dear mother you lost when you were little—and now if there is anything you would like to tell me, try, try to speak to me with the confidence of a son."

"Your always devoted,

"AUNT ANNIE."

I seemed suddenly to see the rapt face of Sylvia-Ann cupped in her two little hands, and to hear—at last with what poignant attention!—"I . . . I shall go to Paris, where it is always gay, and where there are always lovers . . ."

The boulevard stretched itself in the sun like a satiate cat, and there was only the rouge of the women's cheeks, and the passing salacious glance, to suggest the pestilential thing it would become with the night. And Sylvia-Ann was alone in Paris!

"Well—break it to us gently, brother. Is the old mare dead? Has our dear aunt lost her canary?" But Yvonne broke in upon her husband's nonsense.

"Shut up, Billy. Old Maury's in

trouble of some kind. Is it—could we?” Yvonne hesitated, and then broke into a torrent of rapid and liquid French. “Ah, those cold-blooded English girls! It is that one of them has broken your heart, my Maurice? For all this year I have seen you grow older—more grave—even the dress, the hair, the line in the forehead, the ‘imperial,’—all—all—no one thing left of the boy that has gone to England last year. Even I—I, the sister who adores you—if I had not seen you for a year and I should meet you in the street, I should not know you, so much you are different. Then it was a boy—a boy who laughed always like this great one of a brother who laughs always. And now it is a man—grave—Why should a boy of twenty-six have grown an ‘imperial’ if it were not that his heart broken! Ah, you may laugh, my husband, but it is I, your wife, tell you that the cold-blooded girls of your people have left him with the heart empty!”

“O’low ‘cart, have another Ver-mouth while Yvonne is getting on to a finish?”

“No more, thanks.” I was already on my feet, for Yvonne had given me an idea. “I’ll tell you all about it some other time, little sister,” I said, sliding my fingers into hers under the edge of her scarf, with an appropriate pressure. Yvonne found me, by her own statement, an admirable brother-in-law. To her, I was bone of the bone, and flesh of the flesh of her beloved Billy, and my rôle was to keep in the foreground, by my restraint, the undying lure that she had.

“Bye, Yamlet. Our best to Ophelia,” my brother threw after me.

Once clear of them, I sped round the corner, and despatched the following telegram: “Sylvia-Ann with Yvonne. We’ll come next month to see you after our honeymoon.” And then I started out to find her.

In a measure I had acted purely on instinct. I don’t think the desire to score off Aunt Annie had much to do with the immediate sending of that

telegram. Though I must confess it was an extraordinary satisfaction to get back at her “if there is anything you would like to tell me,” with an intimation that she had an overstrained and rather indelicate imagination. I knew well enough the particular kind of shock that reassuring telegram would give her—rather more, I fancied, than being “told the worst,” had the worst existed.

And I was going to marry Sylvia-Ann. That had been inevitable from the moment I had first met her. What the elements were that composed that strange recoil from her has never been quite clear to me. Perhaps that undiluted ecstasy drew me too sharply to heights more rare and fine than I had known of human love—but there was more in it than that. The thing had meant too much to me, had absorbed me too completely. Everything in me, my very soul, must have dissolved in the run of my passion. I could feel myself flowing out to her with an abandon, a completeness, that was, at once, too gross for her—that is, too unfair to her, for it was passion absolute, disregarding her personality—and at the same time, in this very Pan-like quality, too fine and rare a thing for that little wanton innocent. It was a more corrupt and archaic type that I had needed.

I had indeed fallen neatly between two stools, for now, in my perfected egoism, my awkward little childish lover seemed too slight a thing for my vision of heroic love. At the same time I *was* going to marry Sylvia-Ann. As I walked the streets of Paris I made it enough that I loved her and yearned over all the little things that I remembered of her.

After sending that telegram it seemed quite possible that I should meet her as I came out, or perhaps just beyond, outside the great building of the Opéra that lured the glance as it lay in the afternoon sun. The bright windows of the jewellers I passed by. My Sylvia-Ann had nothing in common with those slender and provocative figures that creep up to peer through the glass.

She might be here or there—the Madeleine—the Louvre—and I hurried on. I was sure that I would see her, her bright gold head, and straight boyish figure, somewhere just ahead.

It was eight o'clock when I stopped and forced myself to eat some dinner. I felt that I had been behaving like a bally idiot. Why hadn't I thought of the Luxembourg Gardens or the Gardens of Cluny? It would be to such places as those that I had described to her, places out in the open and yet permeated with the very spirit and essence of Paris, to which Sylvia-Ann would go, and not to those stock show places that our Bædekered English frequent. To-morrow I would go more thoughtfully, and then take her to Yvonne to-morrow night.

VIII

EARLY the next day found me in my brother's studio. They were out. So I dropped rather forlornly upon a divan, feet out, hands thrust deep into my pockets, and meditated. I assumed the time-worn attitude of the disturbed male for Yvonne's benefit. I knew that she would fall to any appeal to her sympathies. Fifteen minutes passed, and I relapsed from my pose to get out a cigarette. I found I had no matches, so began a prowling about the studio.

There was a grunt of disgust from behind me, and my brother's voice called out from a sheltering closet door: "You might as well come out, Yvonne, the brute's going to stay. We thought," he went on graciously to me, "you'd clear out when you found us gone."

"Might I ask just where Yvonne is?" I inquired blandly.

"Oh, under the divan. So all that prepared gloom was wasted upon my desert hair. Would you mind taking this chair?" he drawled, tipping me backwards upon the floor. "Yvonne is emerging from the leeward of your left shank. It ain't modest. Very lean shanks they are, too. I bet Phelia howls when she sees them."

"But it is the language not 'modest,' my Billy!" Yvonne, quite unperturbed, was as a matter of fact emerging from under the divan. She looked very charming in the green sort of smock thing she was wearing, and I told her so. It seemed as good a way of beginning as any. I kept my seat on the floor, knowing that it was the safest place when Billy was in one of his skylarking moods.

"Look here, Yvonne," I plunged at last, "I married you to Billy, didn't I?"

"That's all right, old chap," interposed Billy's voice from behind his canvas. "She forgave you long ago."

I went on, unheeding the interruption, "Now I want you to marry me—"

"I protest!" Billy came out at this. "I do protest—even a brother's love—"

But Yvonne had pity on me, and they sat together on the divan and heard me through in silence.

"You see," I said, summing up, "the poor little thing has her head full of mænads and fauns and Columbines and Pierrots and the demi-monde and the modern rake all dancing down through the ages to some fantastic world-music. She has some sense of an exquisite rhythm to which she hasn't the clue."

"You are a strange people, you English!" Yvonne exclaimed. "French girls, but yes, they are innocent—but ignorant—in that way—never, but never!"

"Why these provocative ellipses, Yvonne?" It was again my incorrigible brother. "'In that way'—In *what* way? In what way was it that our little Yvonne was not ignorant?"

"Great gross one, you bring the blood to the cheek. Say to your brother that he must let me tell to this English baby a few things. Say I will be as discreet, as gentle, as could be a mother."

"The lady says," my brother interpreted, "that these are things that should not be discussed, but she'll give your girl a line."

But I was already on my feet in dismay. "Look here—no—it won't do—" I blurted. Indeed I felt real dismay.

"Look," Yvonne leered like an infant satyr, "is he not all English now? He thinks of his English Mees. She is fresh, she is the lamb white. He becomes now grave, pompous, he swells with seriousness, is it not, Billy? Ah, *méchant, méchant*, but the good God will punish you!"

This last was an interpretation of my perturbed feelings that my English mind would not have arrived at.

"Good Lord! but you must have been a black 'un when I married you, Yvonne!" My brother was rueful.

There was a reassuring flirt and dart in the bright dark depths of Yvonne's eyes that seemed to find its mark in my brother's bosom. "It is to laugh, my Billy," she wooed him.

I, in the meantime, took refuge in my racial characteristic of ignoring the issue. "What we have to do is to let her play her game to the end and never suspect the truth."

"And the end—?"

"Oh, the end is a sister for you who is the only person in the world worthy of you!"

"Noble and altruistic brother, how is my wife to be gratified?"

"Well, what I thought of—what I really should like—Yvonne said I had changed so much—I thought perhaps—" I hesitated, ashamed of what seemed at the moment sentimental asininity—"What I mean is—" I blurted on—"if she didn't recognize me, that perhaps we might fool her a bit, and in, you know, 'the city where there are always lovers,' Sylvia-Ann might find another lover."

"Bless the innocent! He got that out of the movies."

"But she have lof you, my Maurice. It is never that a young girl forget her first love."

"Oh, but you're sentimental, Yvonne! Ain't she the dying duck? What about colouring him up a bit,—tint his goatee, hey, what?—cut off his curls!"

"And we will have the *Opéra Bouffe*, my Billy. But how you are clever!" Yvonne turned, the light of her sarcasm still in her eyes. "It is there,

you do not need to plan. She will be content that you have changed, so much you will be new—indeed she will be content that she have her lover!"

I jerked away from her in annoyance. There was in her tone all the acrid, woman's scorn of the woman in love.

"I think," she struck back at my almost imperceptible gesture. "I think you do not love her, my friend, you wish to play too much."

I was stricken to respect for her insight.

"Well, what about cafés and the Bois."

"What about catching your turtle-dove before you cook her?" Billy grossly observed.

"Oh, I shall find her soon enough. We could dance to your flute. I'd be with Sylvia-Ann mostly—and you could be the villain—"

"Thanks, awfully, you're almost too kind," Billy murmured.

"Well, you might as well put your buffoonery to some account," I responded fretfully.

"Shades of my Aunt Annie!" he ejaculated, "I ain't got no buffoonery. You never met my Aunt Annie, Yvonne. Oh! how she does dislike my Falstaffian moods! 'Not quite nice—not quite English.' I sent her Rabelais. Did she say anything to you about it?"

"Oh, bother Aunt Annie! I want to talk about Sylvia-Ann."

"No villain, then."

"Oh, well, she said she thought it was a book any English *lady* might read without taint, but she didn't think it ought to be put into the hands of the people."

"Now you know my Aunt Annie, Yvonne. Now, then, what is Mrs. Villain to do? And is there any chance of your going soon, you're taking the devil of a time."

"Oh, I'm going. I suppose it wouldn't do to try that plan of mine—No, perhaps better not—still, I don't know—what do you think, Yvonne?"

"She thinks you're maudlin. Good-bye. So glad you called." I found my-

self being deposited by my brother on the stairs outside their door.

IX

It was three weeks before I found her, three weeks of wretched emotional alternations. Sometimes I would wake in the night, to fantastic horror. Some one of those strange night cries of Paris, those disregarded shrieks,—that one cry for help that is gone into the silence almost before one wakes. Who that knows Paris has not started up sure that horrible things are happening just beyond the range of his help? But daylight scattered my fears, and I went on with my to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow.

Then by mere chance I found her. I had wandered until I had quite lost track of where I was. About three in the afternoon there came up a brisk little shower. I turned up the collar of my cape and tossed one end over my shoulder and wandered miserably on, but suddenly it poured, and I made a dash for a café on the opposite corner. It was the Café d'Harcourt. I had not noticed from outside, but the Rabelaisian irreverence of the painted walls of this little heart of the Latin Quarter are unforgettable. I had frequented it in my early student days, but it was at least three years since I had been there. I looked about with some pleasure at those ribald drawings and scandalous verses. There were half a dozen or so new ones, and I left my table to look at them more closely, and looked straight into the eyes of Sylvia-Ann.

She was seated just behind me, at a little table, quite alone. She wore a straight green dress and a rough straw hat, and a mist of her golden hair had caught against the brim. Involuntarily I started forward to greet her, but her little mouth was already buried in a great thick china cup of *café au lait*. She drank with that delicious childish greediness that had always entranced me. Then she looked with grave choice at a plate of pastries on the table before

her, and chose at last the one with the most icing on it.

I walked slowly past her, but she did not look up again. So I had changed. I was a shade piqued. I didn't want her to recognize me, and yet I should have liked to have her know me through any disguise; or so I thought for the moment, with all the perturbation of seeing her upon me.

I turned back from where I had gone, at the end of the room, to look at her again. She had finished her coffee, and her two small hands were clasped upon the edge of the table before her. Her head was tipped a little back, and her face had settled into those dreaming lines that I knew so well. It was only the profile towards me, and it stood out against the steel-blue slanting background of the driving rain like a face upon a medallion. I could see now that she had changed a trifle. The mouth was fixed in its pensive mold, there was less of that tender quivering that suggested the shallows of water; the cheek had lost its childish roundness and was even hollowed a trifle, and all the lines of the face seemed more exquisite and exact in its modelling. She was adorable.

"I don't think you remember me, do you?" I spoke gently at her elbow. I phrased my greeting in this way, first because it was exactly the way in which I should have greeted a *cocotte*—for in the year I had formulated my theory of innocence and vice—and then, because if she recognized me it would seem a natural enough remark.

"Sometimes,"—her clear, calm eyes met mine untroubled,—"*sometimes* I haven't been quite sure that I didn't dream you."

"Sylvia-Ann!" I cried out, "did you recognize me, at once, when I came in?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then why—! Didn't you want to know me any more?"

"I wanted to know you, but I wasn't sure that you wanted to know me."

It was so like her, that detached lit-

the way of summing up the situation, and she had so delicately modulated her tone that, if I stood condemned a cad in my own eyes, it was by no judgment of hers.

"We have changed, haven't we?" She was gravely, and without strain, friendly.

"You're beautiful, Sylvia-Ann, that's not a change, is it?" The colour trembled for a moment in her cheeks. "And I'm still your lover, aren't I?" At that she was really shy.

"Oh, no! Not now. We're older now, and different, aren't we? I think I couldn't."

At that my contrary and fretted heart gave a leap. Sylvia-Ann still to be won! And not too certainly to be won, for those cool friendly eyes that looked into mine were very different from the hurt and pleading eyes of my last memory of her. I was puzzled by the difference in her, for I should certainly have said that her love would have been deep and lasting. I was puzzled, too, by a strange little look of humility, even of diffidence, that had crept into her face.

"You know," she said gently, "after you left, I asked my mother about love. She explained things to me. I didn't know—anything—then. I am afraid sometimes I was very stupid."

She was apologizing to me for her innocence! But, oh, your mother didn't tell you very much, I thought, as I looked into those gently suing eyes.

"I never said you were stupid," I answered, at last. It wasn't an eloquent response, but she was satisfied, for something of the stir of my blood and of my pain, and my affection, and my laughter, must have shown in my face.

A wave of intolerable hunger for her swept through me as I looked into her wide-opened eyes, saw the soft rose of her flushed cheeks, and the eager, parted mouth. The cry, "Oh, Sylvia-Ann, marry me, marry me now!" was on my lips, for I had had a moment of chill apprehension. My need for her and my fear for her cried together to me

that it was not safe to leave this child to wander about Paris alone. But her soft stammering speech broke in upon my thoughts.

"I asked my mother, too," she was saying, "why some people married—really *all* English people marry—and why they didn't do it in Paris. But my mother said they did—except just some, perhaps, 'who went wrong,' my mother said. But I've not seen anybody who looked married here—I think they've *all* gone wrong, they are all so very gay and happy—and I should like to be like them—like that picture, have you seen it?"

It was a delicious piece of drawing that she indicated. Some student, weary for the moment of that fetidness and artificiality that make the lure of Latin Quarter life, weary of the remorseless cynicism, the brilliant and palpitating pessimism of the French, had turned dreaming back to other days. In a moment of happy inspiration he had crystallized his dream there among the more gross records of the district's life. The scene was very simple, the Bois at night and four dancing figures,—two students and two girls and the moonlight. There was an abandonment, a grace, a starry radiance of laughter, an undercurrent of amorousness, veiled and betrayed by that thin silver film of moonlight, that made the thing a very delicate and sensitive record of a passing mood.

"Mightn't we," I suggested tentatively, "mightn't we—If I am not to be your real lover any more—we might 'go wrong' together?"

"Like that—?" Her eyes were most beautiful. "Could we, do you think? Ah, I should like that." With her hands clasped against her mouth she looked up, so absorbed, at the painting above her head. So a young saint might have looked at her devotions.

"Shall we walk," I suggested, "while you tell more about it?"

She still groped a trifle blindly among her emotions, and stumbled upon her phrases, but I could see that, in the year that had passed, the staunch little

mind that had launched out so bravely upon unknown seas of sensation was freighted a subtle and unique personality.

"I used to think—" Sylvia-Ann was walking by my side. "I used to think that I should like to have ever and ever so many lovers. That was a year ago, before I had ever had even one. Then you came, and then I decided that everybody who wanted to should love *me*, but that I would never have another real lover—that was—you know—after you went away—" She broke off and looked up at me now with that curious little dip of the head, as though to look under my eyelids. I was too guilty to dare to glean the sweets of the look of pain that deepened the colour of her grey-green eyes.

"Did you ever feel this way? Now we are in Paris, and you are dressed differently, and your face and everything—well—down inside me I go on loving 'my lover,' and of course that *is* you, but it doesn't seem so to me—" She stopped to puzzle out her sensations.

It was curious, this having the ghost of my year-past self making a third with us. And if that young cad looked both shamefacedly and regretfully at me, I could at least flay him with my reassuring, "It is better as it is. You could never have loved her as I love her. *You* called her 'unintelligent' when her eyes took on this look of brooding serenity, like those wide blank eyes of ancient Greek sculptures. *You* could never have felt the acrid poignant thrill of her against your arm, as I am feeling."

"Would you like to meet my friends?" I asked as we neared her *pension*. "I have a brother here who has a little French lover called Yvonne. It would interest you to meet them, I think; besides, I should like to be nearly always with you. I'm going to be one of those who love you, if you don't mind—"

"I should like that, both." Sylvia-Ann spoke with grave candour. "Both, I mean, your friends and your loving

me—though you're not my lover now. Still, I do *like* you!"

She was on the step of her *pension*, and at these last words of favour I caught her hand and kissed it, and then in the ecstasy of touching her I covered the little pink palm with kisses, opening out each slender finger and pressing back the lace at her wrist to kiss the little blue veins there. Her hand made gentle tentative efforts to free itself. It fluttered like a young bird imprisoned, soft and as warm. Her expression was one of interest and of uncertainty when at last I lifted my face to meet those cool glaucous eyes.

"They always do this, mademoiselle," I reassured her, "in Paris."

X

I went for Sylvia-Ann the next evening in a taxi. There were a number of women sitting about the general room of her *pension* as I went in, Americans, chiefly. Sylvia-Ann was wearing a little straight grey slip of velvet. Her soft round arms were bare from the elbow, and there was a little open space where one glimpsed the round white throat. Very fair and slender and young she looked among those others!

She came forward to greet me. Slipping her cool little hand into mine, she looked with a shy fear at the great hand that clasped it. I think she was not at all sure that I would not commit my last night's violence upon it again.

"I've brought a taxi," I announced at once.

"Oh, no—have you?" Her eyes darkened with pleasure and excitement. "I have been in them before, but not very often. Shall we go at once?"

In the cab she sat with her hands clasped upon her knees,—very small and sweet and quiet. I leaned far back in the corner of the seat so that my face was in shadow, and I took my fill of joy in gazing at her. It was very restful to bask in that broad adequate silence of hers. The world flowed by

—gay women, painted, elaborately gowned, furtive and unhappy; sated, blasé, weary men,—and these ugly things came to rest in that translucent little spirit, where they were beautiful.

She was a perpetual marvel to me, this fair, pensive child, so easily moved to gaiety, so unconscious of the vigor and the power of the mind that drove her with such delicate poise and directness to her experiments in sensations. What would Yvonne make of her, I wondered? I confess I also wondered a bit what Sylvia-Ann would think of the place we were taking her to.

"Here we are." I leaned forward and kissed her as the cab drew up; and I got for my reward that little puckering of the eyebrows that I longed for. Indeed, I was parched for all the little familiar things that I remembered of her.

"*Le Chat Mort*, nice name, isn't it?" I teased her. "Look at the kittens."

It was one of those places that are only to be found in Paris where some gruesome and revolting idea is treated with such humour and such defiance that it is transmuted to wit. The shallow and scintillating gaiety of these profoundly disillusioned people flirts in this cynical way with the eternal verities.

"Oh, poor darlings! Are they *real*?" The kittens that I had called to her attention hung in strangled masses about the doorway; tiny, gaunt specimens, with their four legs in air, were being offered as souvenirs; a large and very realistic one was being turned upon a spit, and endless cat skeletons sported upon the plate-rail. In the centre of the room was a fountain and a broad promenade about it. Cats in bags and cats with weights about their necks strewed the bottom of the basin.

"Well, I'm glad they are stuffed ones. I have a kitten of my own." Sylvia-Ann's eyes were misty, and I began again to doubt the wisdom of Billy's choice. Particularly as I saw that already my beautiful one had begun to attract the attention of those verminous males wandering upon their eternal

quest. The probabilities are that Yvonne and Sylvia-Ann were the only respectable women in the place. One particularly odious Frenchman, the Comte de Laigne, whom I knew slightly, had the audacity to bow to Sylvia-Ann. I swept her away in the opposite direction. Certainly Billy's choice had been a bad one! Just then they appeared approaching us on the promenade.

They were a quaint pair. Yvonne wore a much bespangled gown, her lips were delicately coloured, her eyebrows accented; her hat drooped beneath a weight of flowers, her neck was bare, her chest was bare, and her back—almost.

"There's an Englishman, I think," Sylvia-Ann said as we approached them. "Isn't he funny?"

"Oh, that's my brother and the girl he's in love with. Come on, you'll like them awfully. Her name is Yvonne."

I presented the two. Sylvia-Ann extended a shy hand. Yvonne fluttered and chirped and patted and peeked like an inquisitive hummingbird. She intimated endless comments which my male mind could not grasp, but she was obviously and flatteringly impressed by Sylvia-Ann's beauty. Billy, who had waxed his moustache and wore a monocle, studied Sylvia-Ann in the meantime with aggressive boldness.

"Well, my Pantagruelian stars, but it's a fair wench!" he ejaculated at last. "Don't roll your blue eyes at me, hussy!"

"Oh, look here," I expostulated, "you'll frighten her."

"Now don't you Frenchies interfere." My brother never tired of ridiculing my affectations. "We cockneys understand each other."

Sylvia-Ann regarded him for a moment; then she smiled. "I'm not afraid of him. I like him very much."

Billy promptly tucked her under his arm and walked off with her.

"He's like," she confided to me over her shoulder, "he's like you were in England, only you were very beautiful."

"Oup!" I responded, for Billy had landed a very exact kick on my shin.

"Yvonne, have you the hunger or the thirst? They do talk rottenly, don't they?" Billy put in an aside to Sylvia-Ann.

Yvonne had so far only commented upon the heat of the room, but she had managed to convey to me with eyes and hands, and quirks of her little brown head, her intense admiration for the perspicacity of my adored and beautiful self in having found a treasure so eminently worthy of me; secondly, her intense admiration of the lady; and lastly, her equally intense jealousy of her too otherwise attentive husband. This sounds exaggerated, but you don't know Yvonne.

The pair were ahead, their two gold heads glinting amidst the crowding dark ones. I could see that Sylvia-Ann was very gay, and Billy in great spirits. They were just opposite us when he executed the prank that was to have so disastrous an ending. He started her *alone* round that semi-circle. He trusted to my English mind—I was always more of my nation than he—for it to take me a full minute to realize that it was possible to leave Yvonne alone in the crowd and go to the rescue of Sylvia-Ann. In that minute he had circled back and got me firmly by the elbows.

"In pain, brother—hey, what?—Not very nice to see one's girl doing the promenade, eh? Quiet! Quiet! Here, chuck it!" for our struggle had begun to attract attention—"it's all right. I told her to say '*Va-t'en, mon enfant!*' to anything they said to her. Told her it was an established code of coquetry. She won't understand what they are saying."

"But no, my Billy, it was a *jeu bête*. Tonight you have been too gay. But she goes well, the white one! Look how she is quiet and grave."

It was true. She did walk gravely, with a curious Eastern effect of having veiled herself. The instinct in that sensitive body was infallible. These were not the lovers of whom she had

dreamed. One or two had approached her uncertainly, but had drawn back without speaking, and then, when she was nearing us, that reptile de Laigne, with several of his followers, barred her path. I saw Sylvia-Ann go a trifle pale and put out a guarding hand. But Billy had already leaped to her rescue.

"Come to daddy, my pet!" he shouted, and with a sweep of his great arm cleared them out of her way. The comte alone stretched his hand out, catching her by the wrist, and him my brother took by the back of his garments, rattling him a moment above the people's heads, shouting, "Who wants the kitty? Who wants the kitty?" Then he dropped him sprawling into the basin of the fountain, and with a rush swept us out of the place. We bundled into a fiacre and were off before a gendarme could reach us. But I had caught a glimpse of that little brute face of de Laigne, twisted and distorted with his rage at the indignity. I had an instant of clutching fear. He might—indeed at the moment there seemed no limit to the evil he might do us.

Sylvia-Ann was breathless. "What are we doing?" she asked.

"First aid to cads, that's what we're doing," Billy answered her. "Got going a bit lively, though, what? Damn cur, that de Laigne. Rotten lot, the Frenchies. There are two sitting opposite you. Look at the colour of their gills!"

And indeed Yvonne was as pale and shaken as I was. "But no, my Billy, you are *bien fou!*" she chided him. "Tomorrow," she turned to Sylvia-Ann, "you will come to stay in the house with us. There is a room, a very little room, but beyond the window there is Notre Dame. And you shall see no more the things rude, but only the things beautiful."

There was no affectation of affection and gratitude in the squeeze that I gave her hand. I would rest better with Sylvia-Ann under the same roof as Yvonne. I wished almightily that we hadn't stirred up that rumpus and

fixed our party indelibly in the minds of so many. It was the very last thing that I had wanted to happen. That madman, Billy!

"I suppose it isn't always so exciting?" Sylvia-Ann hazarded.

"What?—who?—us?—" Billy's spirits were undampened. "Was there anything unusual? I didn't notice it. Yvonne, tell cabby to turn Rosinante round. We'll have to show the young lady from Suffolk a little bit of life. How about the Folies-Bergères? Or the Moulin Rouge? Le Néant's not a bad little stunt—hey, what?"

"Well," I put in firmly, "Sylvia-Ann is not going anywhere else with you to-night."

"Oh, she ain't, ain't she? I've got a distinct corner with Sylvia-Ann because I remind her of a silly fellow she liked in England—and don't you forget it! Anyhow, I've got to have a drink. Ever tasted absinthe, Sylvia-Ann?"

"Rue St. Michel. There is a place where we may sit quietly for one little half-hour," Yvonne soothed us both. "And then, two fiacres, and you, my Billy, will take me home in one, is it not?"

"It is not," promptly responded Billy.

"But no, *mon cœur*," Yvonne murderously cooed.

"Oh, well, if you're going to talk that way about it!" And Billy sulked.

At the café he laid his watch ostentatiously on the table, and ordered, "Absinthe for me and the beautiful young lady, and cabbage-leaves for Monsieur and Madame Lapin." Then, feeling that he had restored the balance of domestic tyranny, he cheered up.

"See the pretty ladies, Silly-Ann? You *do* look a great gross country wench beside them. What do you mean by wearing grey nighties and little buckled slippers? Lack of sex tact, I call it."

How, I wondered, had Billy stumbled upon that phrase?

"Well, what's he blushing for?" Billy adjusted his monocle to stare at me.

"Oh, the impure minds of the French!"

"What do you think of it?" I studiously ignored my too exuberant brother.

"They *are* beautiful, aren't they? The women, I mean," Sylvia-Ann was gravely exact. "I don't think I very much like the men. But the women's faces are like moonlight—and such red, red lips—they are lovely."

"Left-overs from Nice, Silly-Ann, you *are* green! How'd you like your absinthe? Paris left-overs go to Milan. That's where I got Yvonne. Looks pretty, doesn't it, dripping through the sugar?"

I don't believe Yvonne and I had ever spent a more wretched evening.

"You have just five minutes more, my friend, if your wit"—I heavily accented my sarcasm—"is not exhausted. Sylvia-Ann, you don't want to drink that stuff—does she, Yvonne?"

"Oh, the shameless fellow, *don't* play with the lady's tassels! What'll the waiter think? And drink your absinthe quick, Sylvia-Ann, before the Bunnies throw a fit."

"Oh, I *don't* like it!" Sylvia-Ann was plaintive. "It tastes like medicine. I never thought it would be like that."

"Oh, these first disillusion! Tastes like the baby's soothing syrup, doesn't it?" He adjusted his monocle and stared at Sylvia-Ann with portentous gravity. "I suppose you know you're drunk, lady? The *things* you've been asaying of!"

But I had drawn my dear to her feet. It was obvious that that wretch Billy got exquisite pleasure from those eager, questioning, startled glances.

"I'll bring her down to you to-morrow, Yvonne. And if you'd like me to help you kill off that brute, I'm at your service."

"Now, don't be peevish, granny!" There was no suppressing Billy. "You're a darling, Sylvia-Ann, and I'm proud to know you. Now say good-night to papa!" and he lifted her clear off her feet, and kissed her on her soft pink mouth.

In the cab I drew Sylvia-Ann's little

hand through my arm. I felt the need of soothing. We drove for some time in silence.

"Well, what do you think of it all?" I inquired at last.

"Well, Paris is too big and wonderful for me to think about yet. And you and Yvonne didn't get a chance to talk much. And I think Mr. Billy is very funny"—I suppose any *child* would find Billy amusing—"but he did make me shy, teasing me so much. But, you know, I couldn't really help liking him. But really I like driving like this with you best of all."

So I went to bed happy.

XI

I FORCED myself to work the next morning, and not to see Sylvia-Ann till tea-time. Then I sent a taxi to take her and her belongings to the studio, where I met her. Billy showed all the symptoms of extensive conjugal advice. He was propitiatory, he was attentive, he was meek. And Yvonne was looking her best. Sylvia-Ann was enchanted with everything.

"Whose room is it?" she demanded.

"Mine," said Yvonne.

"And where do you live?" Sylvia-Ann turned to Billy.

"Here."

"Oh," said Sylvia-Ann, and meditated.

"And do you—?" she demanded of me, "have you—?"

"Not yet," I answered truthfully.

With these cryptic remarks general conversation languished.

Yvonne talked, and Billy murmured in her wake. We planned our days—galleries, churches and gardens; longer trips to Versailles and St. Cloud, perhaps to Fontainebleau; masked parties in the Bois — sometimes the Folies-Bergères, and always cafés. We planned a fête for her birthday, which was at the end of July, still five weeks off.

"It will be different from my last birthday, won't it? That was in Suffolk. The vicar came to tea and he

brought his flute. He played '*Vo ist Sylvia—?*' the song I'm named after, and then he played the old song my mother used to put me to sleep by. And this year we will all be Columbines and Pierrots, and sing French songs and dance at St. Cloud. I *am* happy."

"Here, give me a piece of charcoal. I'll write a programme for every day on this north wall—right up to your birthday. Somebody call out the places."

I threw a warning glance at Yvonne. There were signs of Billy's recovering his cheerfulness.

"Don't be long," I admonished. "I want to show Sylvia-Ann Notre Dame before it closes."

We went very shortly afterwards, having made an appointment with the others for dinner in the Bois. We crossed the bridge to Notre Dame. Inside I left Sylvia-Ann to wander at her will. She kept on coming to me with questions or observations. The cool grey shadows, the lights on the altars, the kneeling figures, seemed to give her a respite from that wide wonder that possessed her. Once the great doors swung open, and she stood poised a moment in a broad low shaft of the afternoon sun. I seemed to see her soul with its bright folded wings, and her fair body clothed in its bright garment of marvel. I think I prayed to her, she seemed so fit a thing for adoration. At last "*On ferme les portes—On ferme les portes*" rang through the building.

We wandered for awhile, crossing and recrossing the bridges to watch the sunset. Sylvia-Ann was enchanted with the puffing of the little steamers plying backwards and forwards from station to station. She felt, too, the immemorial lure of those quaint bookstalls. Together we leaned over the side of a bridge, watching for the first traces of the blue mist that comes up like a veil from the river at the going down of the sun—that magic mist that makes Paris at sunset the loveliest city in the world.

XII

THAT night we danced by moonlight under the trees of the Bois. Billy played his flute, and Sylvia-Ann answered as the reed to the wind. The shadows were sharp, silver and black, and the two girls—the grey-gowned Sylvia-Ann and Yvonne in a bizarre dress of green—appeared and disappeared under the overhanging branches. Billy, watching them, played with Bacchic fervour. Weary at last, arms interlinked, we wandered back to the studio.

I went half-way up the stair with them, and then said good-night. I was glad to leave my dear in the care of her two guardians. I watched them go up the steep dark stair, and at the top Sylvia-Ann turned and looked over the handrail. She waved her hand, and for a moment I thought she would have kissed the fingers to me, but in the end she didn't.

At the door the old portress, who had always stood my friend, amazed me by scowling blackly.

"Good-night, Céleste." I made a tentative advance to her.

"But it is not to such as you that I would give the good-night," she replied sourly.

"Oh, come now, my dear Céleste," I coaxed her, "I haven't offended you, have I?"

"Will you pass, monsieur?"

"Not till you say good-night, Céleste. That little matter of Madame Enraght calling herself Mademoiselle Yvonne—just a joke, you know. The young lady upstairs—"

"But yes, monsieur, 'the young lady upstairs,' she have tell me she come to Paris 'to go wrong,' and Monsieur Maurice Enraght, he go wrong with her. But no, monsieur! In Paris we are not of the saints—but to do harm to such as the little one there under the roof, the white one, the beautiful—no, no, no, no!"

"It's all right, Céleste, I promise you on my sacred honour no harm will come to her."

"On the honour of a gentleman who

lies to an angel, is it not, monsieur?"

I saw that it was hopeless, so I slipped past her and out. I could quite appreciate her point of view. I chuckled as I saw myself through Céleste's eyes. She would not see me at all the next day. I had planned to send a taxi for Sylvia-Ann. We were going to have dinner in the Bois this time. Billy and Yvonne were joining us later on in the evening for a lark.

I stopped on the way back to my studio to order the taxi. I got a delicious thrill in doing anything for Sylvia-Ann. She was capable of such infinite pleasure from quite little things. All through the night when I woke I thought of her, and of how little ripples of laughter would quiver on her lips at the things she saw from the windows, and of how sometimes she would frown, and of just how she would greet me when she met me in the Bois. She would hurry forward with a flushed little face; and her two hands clasped against her breast like a courageous shy child. She was always very anxious to get the greetings over. She seemed to have no fixed relations with people, but to get the shock of their newness and strangeness each time. As soon as she could, I knew, she would turn and walk on, with her head a little in the shadow of my shoulder.

Once in the night I woke with something of the same terror I had for her before she was found. I knew quite what had caused it, because as I had come out of the door of the garage I thought for a moment that I saw the twisted and revolting face of de Laigne peering over a partition in the office at me. I had stepped back out of his sight, and busied myself with a cigarette; then I had walked back to make sure. I was circumspect, because while I knew that we had a reckoning with him still to come, I didn't at all want it while Sylvia-Ann was in Paris. It was bound to be unpleasant and to take time, but it was more the dislike of the publicity that kept me from investigating thoroughly. The little rep-

tile was always figuring in some scandal.

XIII

LATE in the afternoon I took a tram to the point in the Bois that I had arranged for our meeting. It was a bland afternoon, warm and bright. The opposing tides of carriages swept up and down the great avenue. All the little leaves of the overhanging trees had that varnished look of early summer. And the open sun-flecked spaces of grass, with their reclining multi-coloured figures, looking very pretty.

I was in the mood for something a shade less sophisticated, less calculated and adapted to the human needs of spring-moved people. I didn't at all want to make love to Sylvia-Ann in the midst of philandering Parisians. For a moment I thought of taking a taxi back to catch her before she had left, and of going to some different place, but the fear of passing her on the way deterred me.

At six o'clock I was on the lookout for her. At seven she had not come, and I took the taxi that I had not taken an hour and a half before. I rode suppressing my fear. Any number of things might have happened. It had been a hot day, she might have been upset by it—but then I thought of that strong little slender body, and dismissed this as a reason. A sudden fit of shyness was much more possible, but then there was that tender little heart so sensitive to other people's feelings. I could not well imagine her willing to let me wander forlornly waiting indefinitely for her. Some prank of Billy's—yes, or even Yvonne, to point her moral of a chastising Deity.

I could see Céleste's head with its crackernut jaw just inside the open door. She was nodding, half asleep, as I came up, but she sprang into an acid wakefulness at the sound of my voice.

"Is it that I have seen the young Mademoiselle leave? She have left in a cab. Do not pass my threshold, if you please, monsieur."

"Oh, well, that's all right, then, Céleste. I was afraid I had lost her."

"It goes well, you say, that she leave in the private cab of Monsieur le Conte de Laigne? You have sell her, perhaps?" She leaned forward and spat accurately into my face.

I chuckled at the accuracy of her aim. The chuckle spread all over the world, and ended in a great explosion in my head. And then I was looking up into the startled faces of Billy and Yvonne.

"It's all right, old boy." Billy's arm was under my shoulders. "Seem to have fainted, don't you know. Heard that old hag downstairs screaming like a poll-parrot. Anything wrong?"

"Sylvia-Ann—" I gasped. "Sylvia-Ann—" But my tongue couldn't frame the horror that was in my mind. My brain struggled and clutched at the words, and I picked at Billy's coat-sleeve with feeble irritation. My dry tongue seemed to rattle about in the great cavity of my head.

"Better give him some more brandy, Yvonne. And look here, old fellow, can't you get it out? Where is Sylvia-Ann?"

Céleste's head, with its wisps of oiled hair bobbing and nodding upon her wried neck, suddenly peered round the door. "Ah, the evil thing!" she screeched, "does she still live? He faint when he find that he have not got his price, is it not? Monsieur le Conte de Laigne he have not pay."

I saw the colour drag slowly out of Billy's fresh cheeks. "What does she mean?" he asked harshly. "Has that blackguard got hold of our Sylvia-Ann?"

I still couldn't frame the words, but I nodded. I gathered myself together and got to my feet.

"Keep your taxi." Billy held me firmly upright while he directed me. "There are places, you know, brother." He did not meet my eye at this. "I thought you might take this side of the river and I would take the other. We've got an early start. Nothing much matters if we can just get hold of her again. That scoundrel wouldn't dare—that is

—I don't know—what I mean is, I'm not afraid of murder. Only it would be just as well if somebody could meet her—bit of a shock, don't you know, might be bad for her to be alone. Yvonne is going to stay here, so that's all right. But along about midnight you might stay about the bridges a bit—anywhere you've walked with her.”

He helped me into my cab. I still couldn't speak, but I had all his points fixed accurately in my brain. Indeed no slightest thing had escaped my heightened and tortured senses.

“You'll find your cabby knows about all the places there are. I've told him where to go,” and Billy left me.

I don't remember the details of that mad drive. I know that I tore into one house and another, with tears streaming down my face. I called her name—I implored those great saurian women and smirking little men, and my cabman followed me with an explanatory finger to his head, and I caught the word “*fou*” and I raved at them. Always they said they had not seen her. Often that man was known, and they told me of other of his haunts. Later in the night I abandoned my cab, and ran reeling and sobbing through the streets. It seemed that I could not bear it. If she had been ever so little different! But it was her eyes that haunted me, those eager, trusting eyes. Once or twice I know I screamed aloud in the street. Parisians pass you by.

I got my first clue from one of those travesties of youth that haunt the precincts of the Madeleine toward midnight. She had seen the cab of the Comte de Laigne in the Rue de Seine earlier that evening, near a place she knew. I got her to take me to it. It was a rather elegant little hotel. But they feared the man too much to tell me anything. As I left the steps a man crept after me.

“If you give me a louis I will hide you in a doorway and call you if she comes out. Or I will find out where she is and bring her to you.”

I gave him the money, and waited where he put me. Women came up to

me, and I asked them, and they said they would watch for her. Some laughed. They thought it was a case of rivalry. Some believed me. They passed and they were always more. Terror of that great city seized me as I stood. A pall seemed to settle down upon these darker byways so near those brightly lighted boulevards. The darkness seemed full of victims, and the air seemed to echo with their shrieks. A great palpitating cry seemed to go up, as though the city relucted from the dreadful inevitable embrace of the night.

At last the man returned.

“I do not know that it is she,” he said, “but one quite new goes there.”

I looked where his finger pointed, and saw far down the little twisted street a figure that ran and stumbled and fell and ran again. I have seen a wounded animal seek cover in that way.

It was Sylvia-Ann. I could not mistake her. It was she who ran from doorway to doorway, and stooped, and pulled at her streaming hair to cover her face.

Did I say Parisians pass you by? They followed her. A crowd of young men. I suppose my face must have terrified them when I came up. They went on, and I followed her alone out through the Institut Arch straight to the Quai Voltaire. I followed her and heard her cries, and knew that it was I who had brought her to this. She was conscious that I followed her, and she ran with a dreadful cunning. I caught her and held her firmly before she had reached the bridge. She struggled, and the eyes she turned up to me were mad. I called her by name. I implored her. She gave a cry. She dropped like a bird shot dead.

I summoned one of those cabs that wander about Paris by night, willing to take anyone to any place with any dead or living burden. I held her cold face against my cheek, her little battered body lax upon my knees. Yvonne took her at once into her charge when the cab drew up at last to the door.

XIV

FOR a month Yvonne was always with her. Sylvia-Ann's reason was quite gone. She would sit unmoving wherever she was put. Her eyes that had always been so quick, so gay and gleaming, were like dull agate. And the blood never seemed to find its way back to those white cheeks and lips.

Yvonne has always said she did not know which one of us was the more mad. Indeed, my reflections were enough to madden me. They, Billy and Yvonne, didn't know all of the story. They couldn't see as I saw that my egoism alone had blasted that beautiful face.

The physician who attended her assured us that in time and with care her reason would return. If we could tap those former recollections of hers, he promised us that she would be restored to us as she had been then, that she would forget all the events that had destroyed her reason. And it was along those lines that Yvonne worked. She insisted that we take the trips we had planned; and we did. We wandered in gardens and in galleries, hardly speaking to each other, hardly indeed even meeting each other's eyes.

I have never seen anything like Yvonne's patience. She would repeat Sylvia-Ann's name, over and over, drawing her attention to some little thing, a bit of colour, a flower, a child playing, anything that was gay. She was radiant if ever, for a moment, a second, she drew the soul back from that vacuum of abstraction to light those blank eyes.

It was about a week before her birthday that we took her to the Café d'Harcourt. She was always docile; there was something unbearably painful about that blind gentleness of hers. Billy grew more and more haggard. He blamed himself, I knew, because of that affair at the Chat Mort. But I, and I alone, was really the guilty one. Yvonne drew her up to the picture, that picture that was gay as Sylvia-Ann was to be when she had "gone wrong." No

slightest flicker passed into those empty eyes. It was as though she could not see. We left, at last, utterly dispirited.

But as we crossed the threshold Sylvia-Ann turned, and seemed for the fraction of a second to intelligently look back. It was the first voluntary movement she had made since her illness had begun. Yvonne was in ecstasies. She both laughed and cried when we were driving home, facing each other in a fiacre, as we had driven on the night of the affair with de Laigne. She even chattered in something of her old vein, and Billy smiled wanly at her for the first time in the month. I think this re-establishing of something of our normal behaviour stirred that poor stricken mind to some faint answering gaiety.

That night I wrote to the vicar in Sylvia-Ann's village. I told him as much as was necessary, and asked him to come, if possible, in time for her birthday. We were planning now entirely for that day. We talked of it and laughed, we chatted to her as though she understood, and our words and laughter seemed to reverberate from some far blank shore. There was never even a flicker of response in her face, after that one faint gleam. But the doctor was optimistic. She *had* looked back of her own accord. We went again and again in that week to the Café d'Harcourt, and afterwards Billy would play to her on his flute. The night before her birthday she seemed to meditate. There was the faintest ripple of a frown on those still wide brows.

XV

THE vicar came that night. We conspired together. He had not lived on the Suffolk coast, with its long stretches of dreaming marshes, its capricious sea and more capricious winds, for nothing. We chose St. Cloud for our tragic revel. I was to get rid of my imperial and all the French affectation of dress, and to appear to her, at Yvonne's signal, the lover she had known in Suffolk. We

wanted to combine memories of last year and of this for her. No one of us said it, but we all felt that it was the last chance of rousing her.

She let herself be dressed the next evening, standing passively, with her head drooping so as to throw the white senseless face in shadow. Yvonne put on a mask when she had dressed her, and then for the moment it seemed, when only that mouth was visible—for the first time it seemed to me that Sylvia-Ann still lived. The terror of the face lay in those dead eyes; one could feel a bearable pity for that broken mouth.

We sat in the prow of the little steamer that puffed its way to St. Cloud. The vicar played to us, on Billy's flute, wistful, faded old memories from an age long ago, Celtic folksongs with a lilt and a sob in them. The gay little fair at St. Cloud was, I fancy, the gayer for our masked and cloaked party, for our mouths that laughed, and those gay speeches our heavy hearts invented. Later we wandered up the winding paths of the hillsides, past the still black pools that reflected the moonlight, to the plateau at the top which looked out over the trees to the lights of Paris twinkling and beckoning in the distance.

There I drew back into the shadow of the trees with the vicar, and Billy played as he had played to the two girls that night before. Yvonne danced, in and out of the shadows, wooing Sylvia-Ann to join her, calling her name repeatedly in little birdlike tones. And then my heart stood still, for Sylvia-Ann had risen. She went forward uncertainly, with her hands out before her like the hands of the blind. In the white moonlight her colourless mouth seemed carved from marble.

I turned and hid my face against the trunk of the tree, for Sylvia-Ann was dancing, and that white still mouth was curving to its old gay childlike smile. Billy piped with more and more fervour. They tore off their masks, and danced with their laughing faces turned

up to the stars. Sylvia-Ann retreated, and then came on through the moonlight, head back and hair flying in the wind, in an inimitable advance. At a signal from Yvonne I ran forward and knelt before her. Putting her two palms together with a delicious gesture of submission, she laid them between my outstretched supplicating fingers. I still wore my mask.

I drew her down beside me on the grass, for this was the moment we had planned for, while still hardly daring to hope for it. The vicar took the flute from Billy, and seated himself cross-legged on the ground. We gathered round him, Pierrot and Columbine, Pierrot and Columbine, our frilled white garments, peaked hats, and pointed ruffles outlined against the dark trees.

There was that sweet familiar ruffling of the brows as Sylvia-Ann listened to the slow little calling melody that was being repeated over and over. Suddenly she started again to her feet.

"But I know what that is!" she cried. "It's the cradle-song of the Suffolk mothers—my mother sang it—"

She stopped and listened again, for the music had changed. It was "*Wo ist Sylvia?*" that the vicar was playing now.

"I don't understand—I don't understand," she almost whispered. She looked about her—the night, the three harlequin figures, the still black shape upon the ground, piping so softly.

"I *don't* understand. What is it? *You* tell me." I rose to my feet and she put up a little hand to lift my mask.

"*You!*" she cried low to me. "But you're—but you're *my lover!*"

Her face—but there it is, I can't describe her face. I only hope mine showed some of the glory that lighted hers.

"Ah, I knew you would come. I never grieved really—not really to be unhappy." Her two hands were on my shoulders. But her eyes were too wide and bright, and the sweet mouth quivered. I was terrified of her excitement. I

could not have borne it if the light should have gone again from that beautiful face.

"You must be quiet, my darling," I soothed her. "You've been ill, you know. Don't you remember how we all played a game called 'going wrong.' But we went wrong too hard for your dear head. It got tired—"

"You're a little she-bear, Silly-Ann, that's what you are," Billy broke in. "You've been asleep a month!"

"Oh, I never!" Sylvia-Ann rebuked him in a shocked tone.

"Asleep a month!" Sylvia-Ann started, but did not turn around. The clear soft old voice that had spoken seemed to hover still in the air. The vicar had risen, and now stood almost behind her. "Asleep a month—and her dear mother, and that kind loving father—and I—hungry just for the sound of our Sylvia-Ann's voice!"

"Oh, it is—it is!" Sylvia-Ann turned to this glad note. "It is my own dear, dear, *dear* vicar!" She hugged him now with the childish fervour that I could fancy he had missed in her more grown-up years.

"But what's this I hear of 'going wrong,' my little Sylvia-Ann? It's a word I don't quite like. I don't think, you know, my dear, it's a pretty game for my little girl to play." I could see that with our fantastic costumes and the little befrilled figure clinging to his arm, the dear old man's mind had slipped back to the phraseology of Sylvia-Ann's little girlhood. It was so he would have spoken to her when she was nine.

"Well, I don't want to, anyhow," Sylvia-Ann replied. "Now, I'd rather just marry my lover."

"Shades of my Aunt Annie!" Billy ejaculated. "Is that the way they're bringing up young girls in Suffolk? Why, she's a-asking of him to marry her! First kiss for the best man—" But there was a quaver in Billy's voice. We had been through a lot, we four together.

Yvonne was weeping into her white frills. She gave me a damp hug. "Ah, *méchant, méchant*," she whispered, "be very, very happy!"

The vicar, kindest and best of men, took me into his arms as though I had been a son. Then they left us alone. We could hear their voices going slowly down the darkly shadowed paths, and the sound of twigs breaking under their feet. Then it was quiet about us. Somewhere deep in the woods a bird woke with a little complaining cry that died away into faint sleepy chirpings. Then Sylvia-Ann's small arms were around my neck.

"I love you, Pierrot," she whispered.

I took her little face between my hands, and turned it full to the moonlight. Pain and fear were still in the depths of my heart. But there was no troubled mark to mar the sweet plaintive lines of that earnest face—only the dreaming wistfulness, the never quiet wonder, were there as they had always been. The white petals, and that first alluring perfume were gone forever, but those stripped young branches reached strongly up, ready for their greater marvel. The soft, pink mouth was pleading now for kisses.

"Ah, Sylvia-Ann!" I whispered before mine closed upon it. "I don't think I'm *in love* with you—but I *do* love you!"



SOME women are Pompeiis; some are Verduns; others are like Kokomo, Ind., on a Sunday.

IN THE PARK

By Donal Hamilton Haines

THE car swung around the curve with a suddenness which caught the unwary off their guard. Winton had chosen to employ both hands in reading his paper, and so lost his balance. The nearest swinging strap eluded his frantic clutch, and he was forced to take two quick steps backward to save himself from falling into one of the waiting laps on the side of the car.

His first step was without grave consequences, but when his left heel came down the second time, Winton knew that it had come down with cruel force on somebody's foot.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" he exclaimed, then managed to catch a strap and turn to see who had been the victim of his awkwardness.

It was, he discovered, the prettiest girl he had ever seen in his life! She was so pretty, and there was such an attractive little quirk of pain at the corners of her mouth that it was impossible for him to do the usual thing and pretend that he didn't know it was on her foot he had trod.

"I really hope I didn't hurt you!" he said eagerly. "It was very awkward of me."

At best it was an embarrassing situation, and Winton was not sure that he improved it by speaking, but to keep silent with that attractive face within a yard of his own was quite out of the question.

"It was nothing," she assured him. "One doesn't ride a great deal on this particular line without making up her mind to being stepped on now and then."

"But that's all the more reason why

I should have been hanging onto a strap!" he insisted.

The conversation should have closed before this. The apology had been made and accepted; there was no occasion for further speech. Had the girl been twenty years older and plain of face, the man would not have felt called upon to say anything. And had the car been plunged in that silence which usually engulfs hungry and uncomfortable people going home to dinner, there would have been no chance to pursue the subject of the injured foot. But the car was noisy with the clamor of a group of Italian laborers, and detached interchange of ideas might take place without becoming the general property of the passengers.

"Please don't bother!" she begged. "I'm sure most of the blame should rest on the motorman!"

Most unconventional conduct, this, for an unaccompanied young lady! But there was some justification. It lay in Ted Winton's appearance, in the concerned expression on his face—and in the fact that the girl's foot pained her so much that it was easier to talk than it was to suffer in silence.

Winton was a blue-eyed young man, with an almost aggressive air of well-being and a pleasantly browned face, which wore at the moment an expression of really tragic concern, as though he had pushed a baby in its perambulator over the edge of a precipice instead of merely setting his heels on the instep of a gray suede shoe. Not to say anything which might relieve him was a needless cruelty of which the young lady was quite incapable.

"Why, it's awfully good of you to

take it that way!" he exclaimed gratefully. "But I do think the motorman a bit at fault. He sneaked around that curved in such a disgustingly oily, silent fashion that the most hardened strap-hanger was given no warning. My favorite motorman does it after preliminary screechings and grindings of the wheels, so that you know exactly what's coming."

Again it was easy for the lady to smile because she could not do exactly what she wanted to—which was a sit down on the floor of the car, take off her shoe and nurse the injured foot between her hands until it stopped hurting!

"I'm afraid you and I would demoralize the car-service," she said, "because we would employ only the most unskilled motormen!"

There is no need to record the few minutes of conversation which ensued. It remained, of course, on a wholly impersonal basis, and was not, thanks to the sustained chatter of the Italians, overheard by anyone else.

But it gave Winton opportunity to make good use of all his senses, and to impress upon his complex receiving apparatus an indelible picture of the girl—her face, her clothing, her manner, her voice, her smile. He did this almost subconsciously, as one takes in the details of a splendid view. Perhaps he did help matters a little by deliberate effort, because so rarely does one get a chance to know the attractive-looking people one is forever seeing in street-cars!

He used his eyes and ears to good purpose, and was beginning to feel the least bit guilty, when a glance through the window showed him that he had been carried two squares beyond his corner. He pressed the button, and at the same time the girl put the finger of a gray glove against the button next the one he had pushed. The car stopped. They edged and elbowed their way to the door. Nobody else got off.

For a fraction of a second, the man hesitated. The incident was logically closed: he could not speak again with-

out forcing matters. But he did want to see her smile once more before she vanished from his ken! He debated the propriety of lifting his hat, decided against it, and compromised by giving her one more look. He glanced around just in time to see her step across the car-tracks—and limp!

He was at her side in an instant.

"I've really hurt you!" he cried, and began despoiling her of the three packages she carried without waiting for permission.

"There's not a bit of sense in my pretending you haven't," she answered. "The shoe is horribly tight, and I think you put your foot on the tightest spot!"

He suggested eagerly a number of expedients in which hastily summoned cabs figured largely. They finally arranged matters by his retaining her bundles and taking her arm.

Their progress through the few blocks which intervened between the corner and the girl's home was marked by a great deal of laughter, a veritable excess of laughter which served to remove any possibility of awkwardness or constraint. They chuckled over a discussion of the feminine vanity which caused the wearing of tight shoes, and Winton drew a gay picture of the type of motorman which would prevent recurrence of such accidents.

Then, at the steps of her home, the girl took her bundles, Winton raised his hat, and their laughter ceased abruptly. They looked at each other frankly, wonderingly, not blinking the facts. The winds of chance had blown them together. And they liked each other! Beneath the surface of that suddenly created attraction which both had felt lay possibilities of deeper things which sobered them.

They stood silent and motionless for more seconds than were needed. It was as though that wind of chance had blown wide a door and given them a glimpse of unguessed things beyond. And the locks and bolts of the door lay in their four hands.

She could not help letting a shadow of regret, the merest touch of shy

eagerness creep into her smile and voice.

"Good-bye!" she said.

"Good-bye!" answered Winton.

And then, because he heard the slight tremble in her voice, and leaped all too eagerly to the knowledge that she would not deny him if he said that he wanted to see her again, he jammed his hat down hard on his brown head and turned abruptly on his heel.

For while it might have passed only for one of youth's splendid adventures with the girl, it was something more for Ted Winton, who was engaged to be married in two weeks' time!

II

HE walked home with his mind in a turmoil. Two figures persisted in ranging themselves side by side in the eye of his brain—the woman who had promised to be his wife and the yellow-haired girl with the gray suede shoes. They demanded inexorably that he compare them detail for detail and judge them from the depths of his soul.

In spite of himself he yielded to the demand. He made the comparison whether he would or no. And once the flood-gates of restraint were opened, the truth swept upon him like an avalanche. The glorious, splendid tints and lines of the girl in the car made the figure of Mary Haddon seem faint and dull!

As he feared, there was a chattering group on the steps of the boarding house when he turned in from the street. They greeted him boisterously.

"For a prospective bridegroom," declared Blake, "you're the gloomiest looking mortal imaginable!"

"A quarrel with his lady-love!" suggested Lafferty.

"Search him!" begged Dorothy Wintans. "I know she's sent back the ring and it's in his pocket."

Winton tried to summon a grin, and made but indifferent work of it.

"If I say it's a headache," he protested, "nobody will believe me."

"Of course we won't!" the circle assured him.

He got past them and went to his room, sat down on the edge of his bed and waited until the sounds from below told him that they had all trooped into the dining-room and he had the rest of the house to himself. Then he crept guiltily into the hall and used the telephone.

When Mary's voice answered him, he experienced a strange dryness of the throat and a difficulty of articulation.

"I don't believe you want to see me tonight," he said. "I've a splitting headache, and I'm fit for nothing but going to bed."

She answered as he had known she would, making no mention of her disappointment at not seeing him, concerned only with what he had done to bring the headache upon him and how he might rid himself of it.

He went back to his room and resumed his seat on the edge of the bed. But this soon grew intolerable. He put on his hat and slipped out of the house, having no mind to face the batteries of raillery at the dining-table.

There lay before him a definite problem which had to be faced and solved without delay. It was not Winton's way to put things off, whether they were agreeable or otherwise. He took them by the throat and fought them on the spot.

It was not as though the thing had come upon him out of a clear sky. It was the crystallization of a vague fear which had lain at the bottom of his heart ever since the Sunday afternoon when Mary had promised to marry him—a fear of himself, a fear of chance! What was there, he had asked himself again and again, by which he could assure himself that Mary Haddon was the one woman on earth for him? He did not doubt the sincerity and completeness of his love for her. It reached to such limits of affection as he could conceive. Yet that was not enough. Suppose some other woman should appear?

Exactly this had happened! The picture of the girl in the car had been laid over the other and almost effaced it. He tried to be honest, tried to be fair, but there seemed no dodging the facts. The girl's golden beauty overshadowed Mary's dark plainness, and her laughter rang in his ears as Mary's had never done. He could still feel the warmth of her round arm against his hand as he helped her across the streets. Mary had worked too hard to possess smooth, round arms!

Striding through the streets as though a troop of plaguing devils were at his heels, he made the stubborn, difficult beginnings of his battle. What was he to do? What course was he to take? He knew what he wanted to do. That very instant he longed to turn and find the house where he had left the girl an hour before, to call her out, to be with her, to watch her, to listen to her voice. That was a thing not to be done now. It might come later, but not until after the battle had been fought—and lost!

He did not stop to ask himself what this sudden turning of his world upside down meant, or what stigma attached to him in consequence. Self-analysis with him did not take that course. He looked for consequences rather than causes, for definite, final courses of action rather than subtle processes of thought.

What was he to do?

III

Two courses were open to him. He could tell Mary the truth, leave her and go to the other woman. Or he could marry her in the full knowledge that he could care more for someone else.

He tried (with youthful fatuousness) to pretend that he was not thinking of himself but of Mary. He wanted to be fair to her. Which would be the honest thing? To give her what he felt was the husk of love, or tell her the truth? There was terrible cruelty in the last, but was it worse in the end than the lingering torment of the other

knowledge which was sure to work its way to the surface?

An hour of rapid walking brought him to the edge of a little park, growing shadowy in the gathering twilight. Scampering children were racing in the last bit of play before bedtime, sleepy birds twittered in the bushes, red and green iron benches showed invitingly among the shrubbery. Winton walked into the park and sat down on a green bench, paying no attention to a figure seated diagonally opposite him.

His vigorous mind continued ruthless attacks on the problem which lay before him. Opposing forces battered his brain mercilessly. At one instant he heard Mary's voice, almost motherly as it advised no dinner and a hot-water-bag at the back of his neck, at another the rippling, infectious laughter of the golden-haired girl. He sat very stiff upon his bench, his feet well apart, his elbows on his knees, hands locked between them, head bent.

"Suppose we talk, my friend!"

Winton looked up quickly. The motionless figure on the other bench had stirred and resolved itself into a white-haired man in a black suit, with a broad-brimmed black hat on the seat beside him, his hands folded on the golden head of an ebony cane. In the twilight, Winton could just make out that his face was smooth-shaven save for the straight line of a close-trimmed moustache as white as his hair.

"I watched you come in and sit down," the old man went on, "and I could not help following the course of your thoughts a little. You are too young for sorrow and I am too old for it. Yet it has both of us in its grip. Perhaps if we talk we shall banish it."

The younger man hesitated.

"I'm rather ashamed to confess my troubles," he said finally.

"Because I am a stranger?"

"No, because of the nature of the case."

"Ah, well, then that's a point in your favor. A sense of shame is a good start on the road to happiness. Suppose I speak first as I seem readier for

confession. Do you mind listening to the maunderings of an old man?"

"Not in the least," replied Winton. "My wife is dead," said the old man simply, "and I can't drive myself beyond the realization of that bare, hideous fact. She is gone and I am alone. I am alone! After all, that is what I am really thinking.

"One or the other of us had to go first. If the choice had been given me, I would have had it just as it is. I would not have left her to the suffering and loneliness. And yet I find myself resentful, complaining, pitying myself far beyond the measure of my deserts.

"All day long—she died this morning—I have been wishing that I could die. I am not going to die—yet. I am very old, but I am strong and sound. I shall live five years at least. If I can only bring myself to realize that to die now would be to rob myself of the five best years of my life. At moments, I can believe it, then my confidence slips away and the pain comes back. I think perhaps talking to you, putting the inevitable truths before myself in definite speech instead of dodging them as I can in the shadowy corners of my own mind will help me."

He paused. It had grown so dark that his black-clad figure was only a vague dark blur in Winton's eyes. But from the scrape of metal on gravel, the younger man knew that his companion had moved the ferule of his cane along the surface of the path.

"Fifty-two years we had lived together," the firm, gentle voice resumed. "Those years are full of the endless, countless miracles that only love can work—yet now for the first time I can turn and look back at them because I know the future holds no more. I can appreciate the fulness of the life that lies behind me—yet here I was wishing for the darkness to take me, too!

"I can't possibly tell you of those years, or of the woman who has gone. Such things can only be felt. There is a sacred intimacy about them which can not be communicated perfectly nor fully understood. Sympathy there may

be in a third mind, but never understanding.

"Ah, I am beginning to really sense my happiness! I have these few years in which to be grateful, in which to appreciate. If every day held fresh joys, I could not do it. The end would come before I was ready. That sounds a little incredible, doesn't it? It won't in half a century!

"And I was within a hand's breadth of missing all of it! There was another woman, all those years ago. She was fairer, as men judge fairness, she moved in a wider, more brilliant circle of life. I was young, ambitious, reaching out for everything I could grasp. This woman seemed full of a greater promise, seemed to offer me more of those things for which youth yearns so wildly.

"It was not long before my marriage that she came into my life and almost changed it. I do not know what might have happened had matters taken a normal course. The secret which underlies those matters is so deep, so subtle that it is hard to grasp when one is living easily from day to day. I should not have grasped it—no, I should not have grasped it!"

He fell into a musing silence. Winton stirred, then spoke hesitatingly.

"Just what secret do you mean?" he asked diffidently. "I don't think I quite understand."

"Of course you don't. If such things were clear to the eye of youth, there would be much less sorrow in the world. The secret, lad, is the love that comes to life in a woman's soul when she has promised to take one man out of all those she might have chosen! It is no more like the love that goes with the first kiss than night is like day. There is in it something of the love of maid for sweetheart, something of the love of brother for sister, more, infinitely more of the love of mother for child. It has all those calm, sustaining, comforting qualities that you see in the faces of the madonnas, yet answers passion with passions as tinder fires to the spark!

"And I, blind, headstrong, self-centered young idiot, was close to turning from the wonder that I had made of a woman, for the sake of a pair of eyes that seemed to shine more brightly, and a face that had more of what the world calls beauty in it!

"Well, I was saved that horror. I fell sick and for days and weeks I went dizzily along the edge of the pit of darkness. Every day that I lay there the room was perfumed by the flowers sent me by the woman with the bright eyes.

"Yet through all that time I was conscious of a presence in the room that was not the doctor or the nurse, or any of those white-faced, whispering friends who came to ask for me, a presence that was very near me in my flashes of complete consciousness, and never quite absent even when my brain was twisted and tortured by the fever.

"Finally, when I came back from the edge of the pit, and my brain cleared wholly for the first time, I awoke to sanity with my hand between the palms

of a woman who sat on the edge of my bed, the hot tears streaming down a face haggard and worn from her vigil, and in her eyes such a love as no man on earth deserves. And this morning she died!"

He stopped. For an instant Winton sat perfectly still. Then he rose with the swift certainty of one who has made up his mind, and crossed the gravel path.

"There is no need of my speaking," he said. "You have done that for me. I—I can't say anything just now. I have to go. But I should like it if I can find you right here to-morrow night. Will you be here?"

"Yes," answered the other, "I will be here."

Winton hurried away, walking swiftly with his head bent. It was Mary herself who answered his long ring at the bell. He did not speak, but caught both her hands, drew her into his arms and held her very close.

"My headache has gone," he said. "But I had to come and tell you that I love you before I slept!"



THE SLAVE

By Charles Hanson Towne

I SAID to her (our love at last having died),
 "Last night was the first night I did not dream
 Of you and your wild hair. Therefore I deem
 Our loving done. Me you have crucified,
 Me you have tortured, utterly denied.
 Hence am I glad when I remember this:
 One night without a thought of our last kiss—
 Only still sleep on Lethe's velvet tide!"

But Love made answer: "Fool! when you recall
 That one night out of all that went before—
 Forgetting honey, and remembering gall,
 You have not passed my barred and bolted door;
 They still are slaves of mine who dare to boast
 Of freedom. In that hour I own them most!"



WHITE AS HEAVEN

By Charles Stokes Wayne

IT was Wednesday, and he was to see her again that evening. He had seen her now, every Wednesday evening for three weeks running; seen her and talked with her. He had seen her on other evenings prior to that first Wednesday, but then they had not spoken, and there were intervals, sometimes of weeks, when he did not see her at all. He remembered, though, that she had attracted him strangely from the first. Strangely, that is, because he had fancied no woman could ever attract him again. Nothing even diverted him. That was his trouble. And it had been growing on him for three years—ever since that June 19th when the accident happened, which, oddly enough, was a Wednesday, too.

In the beginning he had rather courted his grief. If he could find any solace, whatever, it was in memory and mourning. He had avoided his friends, become more or less of a recluse, neglected his profession. Later, he had roused himself with an effort and honestly striven to forget. But he couldn't. He pictured himself as a creature encaged. Whichever way he turned there were bars, too strong to be broken, too well-fixed to be displaced. His sorrow had made him a prisoner.

He had tried foreign travel in the hope of finding therein the key for his release, but it only added to his torture. He had wilfully and at some effort indulged in all sorts of excesses, to find in the end that his cage had contracted and that the bars were closer together.

His physician, fearing at best a simple melancholia, had advised a sanitarium. But to this Ledgerwood would

not listen. He was too confined as he was. His one passion was to escape. And Nerissa Ames, it appeared to him now, had brought him the means.

He had been conscious from the very beginning—from that chill, misty evening in early April, when she passed him at the corner entrance to the square, wraithlike, almost, in the fog-diffused light from the street lamp—that something had quickened within him. He realized now, though he did not recognize it then, that this something was vague desire. And for the tangible. Hitherto his longings had been for inexistent, figurative things, like escape from his cage and the return of peace and interest in life. But this was different.

He got a glimmering of it the second time he saw her. For it came upon him then, more strongly, and he had halted and turned to watch her until she was out of sight. After that he never passed that corner that he didn't think of her and glance about in an instinctively wistful way on the chance that she might be near.

And then there had come that evening three weeks back when he not only turned to watch her, but turned and followed. There was nothing vague or elusive then about his interest or the reason of it. He was attracted and he was puzzled.

Until, in the twilight, he sat down on the park bench close beside her he had never really had a fair look at her face. So it was not her beauty which had arrested him. He had remembered her more by her height—she was nearly as tall as he was—and the graceful freedom of her carriage, like an animate

Victory of Somathrace, than by anything so personally definitive as lineament or coloring. But he had remembered her most by the spell exerted upon him by her presence, which was perplexingly inexplicable.

He knew now that she was flaxen-haired and blue-eyed, with a skin of transparent whiteness and very little color; that she had magnificent shoulders and long, lithe limbs. That her hands and feet were proportionately small; that she affected frocks of blue, and that she wore forget-me-nots on her hat. He knew, too, she had a pleasant, refined voice and that she had been given a fair education. And he knew her name.

Yet it had not occurred to him until just now as he sat waiting for her on that same bench that he knew very little beyond these things. She had volunteered no scrap of her history. He had assumed that she was a working woman—probably a stenographer—but it was purely an assumption, and there was very little to warrant it. Each of the three times he had talked with her he had asked to walk home with her; but she had refused on the ground that she was not going home. It happened in this way that even her place of residence was still a secret to him.

Their conversation had been largely concerned with abstractions. On various subjects they had gathered each other's viewpoint. She had announced herself at the earliest stage of their acquaintance as a rebel when it came to conventions. She had met his overtures more than half way. Having spoken to her she saw no reason why she should hesitate to answer him. She went on the theory that all men were her friends until they proved themselves enemies. And then, she said, she was able to take care of herself.

Ledgerwood, on the other hand, had always been rather a slave to convention. He was a gentleman of fixed ideas, and especially regarding women. There were good women and there were bad women. Between them there

was not only a line drawn, but a wall built—impenetrable and unscalable. He had known women on both sides of the wall, but he never mixed them up. He treated each according to her class. It was rather hard for him, therefore, to reconcile the unconventionality of Miss Ames with his theories. She didn't seem to him a bad woman, yet a good woman wouldn't talk as she talked. He wasn't sure that a good woman would have allowed him to talk to her at all. Therefore he had put on at least a part of the armor he always used when he crossed the wall, and he had lowered his visor.

If he knew little of her, she knew still less of him.

Yet the meetings had done more for him than his year of foreign travel, more than his unbridled excesses, more than could possibly have been done by his physician and his proposed sanitarium. And it was this that had him guessing. No matter how much he tried, he couldn't argue it out on any hypothesis to even a halfway satisfactory conclusion.

He had been trying it again this evening, while he waited, unheeding of the passing pedestrians, of the souging of the south wind in the oak leafage above him, of the flitting fireflies, or the echoing clang of the street-cars and voices of motor-horns. Yet her coming roused him. He felt her presence while she was still a dozen steps away, before she had turned the bend in the path, and was on his feet to greet her.

He met her smiling with outstretched hands.

"You're late," he said, but his tone was not chiding.

"Yes," she answered, gaily. "I know. But I'm free. Isn't it better so?"

"Free?"

"I shan't have to go so soon. My usual errand is finished."

"Then, when the time comes, I may walk home with you?"

"If you care to. Yes. It isn't far."

"I do care to," he told her.

And when they had sat down she told him what her usual errand was.

She had a friend who was ill, bedridden, over on West Twenty-second street. She had been lying there, now, for nearly a year. She'd never be able to walk again, the doctors said. It was she that Nerissa spent most of her Wednesday evenings with. She had gone this afternoon, instead, had dined there, but had been late getting away.

"You had a holiday to-day, then?" suggested Ledgerwood, unconsciously voicing his assumption that she was employed in an office.

"A holiday!" she repeated, puzzled. "I have nothing but holidays. You thought I—"

Then he begged her pardon. He had only imagined, he said.

"Oh, of course," was her rejoinder. "It's natural you should. But I don't. My only work is killing time. My friend is out of town."

Instinctively, he knew what she meant. Instinctively, too, he suffered for a moment a shiver of repulsion. She was very much, then, on the other side of the wall. And he had been treating her all the while as if she wasn't. But, oddly enough, the repulsion refused to linger. There was something about the thought of that other friend—that paralytic to whom she was so unselfishly attentive—which swayed against it. He knew from that that she was not wholly bad.

She noted his silence—sensed his surprise.

"You're disappointed," she said, a little sadly. "You'd rather I worked, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," he told her. "I would. You see, I never suspected—"

"That's funny. I thought you understood all the time."

"Why should I? You never gave me any reason."

"But you spoke to me."

"Yes, I spoke to you, and you answered. Wouldn't a—" he was about to say "good girl," but checked himself—"a working girl do that?"

"If she was good she'd probably be afraid to. Nice girls don't make

friends with strange men in the public parks. You must know that."

"Don't," he objected. "I won't let you say you're not nice. You've never said anything to make me believe that."

She began twisting her handkerchief between nervous fingers.

"What more could I say?"

He knew it was contrary to all his antecedent convictions, but he said: "That doesn't prove anything at all. Circumstances make such a difference." It was as though the words had been put in his mouth and he was uttering them without any volition of his own.

"You're only saying that," she told him. "You don't really think it."

But Ledgerwood insisted. He knew that she was different.

"No," she maintained. "I may not be like the worst, but there are hundreds better than I am. I'm no exception. Would you like me to tell you my story? It's rather customary, isn't it?"

"I'd love you to," he said, "but I don't know why you should. It's probably painful. I don't want you to distress yourself."

She shrugged her fine shoulders. "It won't prove your argument," she asserted.

"Do you want to let me be the judge of that?"

"I want to tell you if you want to hear."

"I've just said that I'd love to."

She drew a little closer to him and he could feel the warmth of her arm against his. Then she began in what was almost a whisper:

"My mother died when I was a baby." And at the end of that one sentence she paused and looked up at him. "See how commonplace it is?" she asked, with something of bitterness in her tone. "Nine out of every ten of them begin that way. If you've had any experience—and I guess you have—then you know."

"No," he told her. "I was never interested enough to listen before."

When she was about to resume, two men, shabby derelicts, chose their bench for a resting place. And then, though

she was willing enough, Ledgerwood wouldn't let her.

"They might overhear," he whispered, "and I want it all for myself."

He stood up and she rose with him.

"Would you mind," he suggested, "coming over to my rooms? I've bachelor quarters in that apartment house on the corner. I can give you some refreshment there and you can smoke a cigarette while you talk."

Nerissa made no demur until they stood at the entrance to his home. Then she said:

"Had I better, do you think?"

"Why not?" he asked.

She tossed her high-held, defiant head. "I'm thinking of you," she told him.

"Oh, never mind me. If it's all right for you it's all right for me, too. I have nothing to lose."

II

THEN they went in, quite boldly. Her carriage was almost arrogant. But when they were in his rooms—richly beautiful in furnishing and ornament, yet masculinely severe—and he asked her what refreshment he could give her, she was humbly pleading as she questioned:

"Will you mind if I refuse?"

"Mind? Of course not. I wish you to be pleased."

"I don't—I never drink anything unless I have to," she made clear. And Ledgerwood was as pleased as surprised.

"Do you ever have to?"

"To be sure. Frequently. *He* doesn't like it if I don't."

"Oh, I see."

They were standing near a rectangular, hand-carved table in the center of his library, on which an orange-shaded drop-light glowed. There was a casket-like box there of silver *repoussé*, and he turned back the lid.

"Cigarettes?" he suggested, smiling.

"Am I free?" And she smiled back at him.

"As the wind."

"Then, no. I hate them. Yet I've smoked two dozen of a night. You see how obliging I am."

"I see what a slave you are," he said.

He twisted a leather couch around for her before a window, whose curtains were lightly stirred by the night-breeze, and piled cushions in one corner. Unbidden she had already removed her hat with the forget-me-nots and as she sat down she brushed back her fair hair with her two small, slender, ringless hands.

Ledgerwood drew up a deep chair facing her and relaxed into its depths.

"Aren't you going to smoke?" she queried.

"Not if you hate cigarettes. I—"

"But that's only for myself. I don't mind you. I'd rather you would."

"Your wish here is law," he laughed, as he took his case from his pocket.

And thus comfortably placed, beyond all chance of outside interruption, Nerissa Ames told Byron Ledgerwood her story. It didn't make her out very widely different from hundreds—yes, thousands—of others, but Ledgerwood didn't know of those. It did make her out different from what he imagined of his "bad women" generally. She wasn't what he could really call "bad." Weak, perhaps, yes; in spite of her defiant carriage, which he came to believe was no part of her nature, but a sort of defensive armor which she had assumed. Her life hadn't been a frolic, it had been a tragedy.

And the first act of the tragedy included her mother's death and her father's remarriage. Then there had come into that Middle West family a second brood of children, and the step-mother's favoritism for her own was as natural as hunger. Nerissa had borne with cumulative injustice until she felt she could bear with it no longer, and then she ran away.

What she was running to she neither knew nor cared. Anything was preferable—at least, so she thought—to what was. But when it came to earning her

own living she discovered that she was unequipped. She tried, of course, just as they all do. She tried longer than some of the stronger and for a less time than a few of the weaker. And she learned a lot of the world and of its wickedness. At twenty she had married—not for love, but for home and protection—and discovered that she had given herself to an escaped convict—a criminal who was proud of his crime and his cleverness in eluding justice. For such an association she experienced a repugnance greater than her necessity. In less than a month she deserted her husband. With what little money she had she came to New York and for two years did, as the phrase goes, “the best she could.” In her strong, young body, with her good looks, she had a marketable commodity, and crushing down within her her better instincts—numbing herself to conscience—she plied her profession and prospered.

That, in brief, was her narrative; and she told it unsparingly, making no excuses, offered nothing in extenuation. Yet Ledgerwood read into it for himself a scathing arraignment of his own sex in general and of certain types in particular. Personally he had, save for that period of purposeful excesses, lived a rather exemplary life. He was naturally clean-minded. He had idolized his wife—she who had met Death in the overturning of her own touring car on that fatal June 19th—and had been prone to judge all other women by her standard. But under the influence of his acquaintance with Nerissa, and especially under the effect of her life history, as he had just heard it, there had occurred a marked broadening of his viewpoint.

“But tell me,” he said when she ceased speaking. “You surely don’t indict the whole masculine sex on the evidence of the class of men you have met?”

“I haven’t said that I indicted any part of it, have I?” she asked amiably.

“You haven’t said it, exactly; but your whole tale is an indictment.”

“Men are as God made them, I suppose.”

“Not at all,” he argued. “Not the men you speak of. They are as the devil made them, I should say.”

“And we? Are we as the devil made us?”

“Vicariously, yes. You are as men, acting for the devil, have made you. And even thus aided I can’t see that they’ve been very successful in your own individual case. Maybe there has been a combatting good influence somewhere.”

“You mean a Godly man?”

“Possibly, if you care to call it that.”

“The so-called Godly man,” she said, after an instant, “has been the worst of all.”

He asked her for an explanation and she went on: “The man I call my ‘friend.’ He’s everything that is good and big, so far as the public knows him. He’s a vestryman in his church, passes the collection plate every Sunday, gives his thousands to charity, endows whole wards in hospitals.”

“No, no,” Ledgerwood objected. “I can’t— You’ll pardon me, won’t you? I don’t mean to doubt your word. Still, it seems incredible.”

“I know it seems incredible, but it’s true.”

“But think how he’s put himself in your power under such circumstances. You must be mistaken. Surely you don’t know him under his real name.”

“No,” she said. “But I’m certain, just the same. I suspected first when I saw his picture in the newspapers. Then I made sure. I went to church one Sunday and watched him, without letting him see me. I know him too well, you know, to make any mistake.”

Ledgerwood lighted a fresh cigarette. Here, indeed, was a revelation which shocked him. Still, men were men, and if he were a bachelor or a widower, why—

“He is the worst of all,” she repeated.

“Because of his hypocrisy, you mean?”

“No. Aside from his hypocrisy.

Because of his beastliness. Because of the way he humiliates me. It is he that makes me drink champagne until I am sick," she explained, "and lights cigarette after cigarette for me, until I am so dizzy I can't see. Yet those are the least of his shameful demands."

Ledgerwood's cheeks flamed for her.

"He's unmarried—this brute?"

"He has a wife and grown daughters. He's a model husband and father, they say." She was twisting her handkerchief again. Ledgerwood heard it tear between her fingers. "Some day, I think I shall kill him," she added.

"Give him up," he urged. "You're not tied to him."

"I must live," was her answer.

"You've lived before. You'll live again. I can't conceive of you submitting to such degradation. Is he—very generous?"

"Considering his millions, he's niggardly."

"Then I don't see why—"

She sat up straight, dropping her feet, which had been hunched up under her, to the floor.

"I'll tell you why," she shot at him. "Because I'm praying that he'll be found out."

"Why pray for something you can do for yourself?"

"Expose him, you mean?"

"Of course. Write a letter to his wife."

She stared at him for a long moment before replying. Then:

"You think I would do that?"

"Wouldn't you?"

"Never. No matter what he did. But if chance—if fate. That would be different."

Yet the world said that long ago Nerissa Ames had lost her honor!

Soon after this she rose and began pinning on her hat.

"It's not a bit of use to think of coming with me," she told him, as he prepared to accompany her. "I live only a step away."

"All the same, I'm coming," he said.

And he got another shock for his pains. She was living in the house

from which his wife had been buried.

It was half-way down the block and had been turned into an apartment hotel. He and his bride had come to it after their honeymoon, and all about it clustered fond associations. Following the tragedy, however, he wished never to see it again, and his father-in-law had taken it off his hands, reconstructed it, and leased it at a largely profitable figure.

Whatever Ledgerwood's father-in-law touched turned to money.

He thought of this after he had bidden Nerissa good-night.

"I don't suppose, now," she had said, "that you'll ever want to see me again."

And he had answered: "Now, I shall want to see you more than ever again. I've only just begun to know you. I'll be waiting for you next Wednesday, same bench, same time."

Then, as has been said, he went away thinking of his father-in-law's knack for rolling up millions. He was very much of the kind of man that Nerissa had described so far as wealth, and Godliness, and charity were concerned. John Stansfeld was one of the twenty richest men in New York. Nerissa's friend probably came lower down in the list. Ledgerwood had thought of his father-in-law, at once. But even now, knowing that he owned the hotel in which she was established, his son-in-law couldn't regard him as a possibility in the case. The old gentleman's impeccability was beyond question.

In spite of this, however, Ledgerwood did think of it again. He thought of it when, just a week later, he had a telephone message from the "Old Man," saying that he was in town and wished him to lunch with him. And he thought of it that day at the luncheon when he saw him drinking buttermilk. And again, when the millionaire laughed and exhibited a shining row of false teeth between straight, colorless lips. No, he certainly, of all men, was not the unconscionable old satyr that Nerissa described.

It was a matter of charity which Mr. Stansfeld wished his son-in-law to look

after for him. He was in town only for the day, he said, and was too much occupied to manage it himself. "Mother has not been very well, of late," he added, "and seems to feel better when I'm with her. So it's my duty as well as my pleasure to hurry home to her. I'm taking the four-twenty, this afternoon, which will get me there before bedtime."

Ledgerwood, as he went about the mission entrusted to him—it was to arrange for the admission of an old couple to a denominational home—suffered poignant pangs of self-reproach. That even in the smallest measure he should have entertained so unjust, so unwarranted, a suspicion, tormented him with remorse. If ever there was a thoroughly good and upright man, loving God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself, that man was John Stansfeld. That explanation of his hasty home-going touched Ledgerwood in his softest spot. It was nothing short of sacrilege to harbor a thought of marital incontinence in such a connection. His father-in-law and mother-in-law were Darby and Joan over again. He had always believed it heretofore, and there was no reason for changing his faith.

In this mood he even regretted having listened to Nerissa's story. It was true that "evil communications corrupt"—not merely good manners, but good thoughts. And he now hated, loathed and despised the unspeakable creature of her confession all the more in that his foulness had cast for even so brief a moment a shadow on the clean—the spotless—the immaculate and the inimitable.

But throughout it all there was no slackening in his need for Nerissa's presence and companionship. It was Wednesday again, and as he went about the task set him by Stansfeld, the consciousness that each minute brought him nearer the evening and that bench in the park was never absent. As the hour grew more imminent his eagerness increased. Although he had ample time for a leisurely dinner, he devoured one

course after another in impatient haste, arriving at the rendezvous at least twenty minutes in advance of the appointed time. To his annoyance he found the bench—their bench, as they had come to call it—occupied. So instead of walking about he chose another, nearby, from which he could keep a watchful eye upon it, determined to appropriate it at once, should it be vacated.

But it was not vacated. The occupants were two young couples, evidently friends, who maintained a continuous chatter, interlarded with giggles and unpleasantly strident laughter. Ledgerwood feared they were fixtures for the evening. He was tempted to ask them to exchange with him, but realized that he could give them no reasonable excuse for the favor, since he had nothing better to offer than a romantic whim.

At intervals he consulted his watch. He had hoped that Nerissa, by some chance—eager, possibly, as himself—might be early. But on the contrary, she was late. It was already five minutes past the hour, and a stiff breeze had sprung suddenly out of the west. Before he suspected it a peal of thunder echoed and rain began to fall in great pelting drops. Pedestrians broke into a run for shelter. The young couples of the coveted bench prepared for flight, the girls taking their hats in their arms and turning their cheap, flimsy skirts up over their heads. In a minute or less the park was the scene of a stampede. And Ledgerwood, disappointed and rebellious, joined the evacuation.

When he reached his apartment house on the corner he was pretty well drenched. His straw hat was saturated, soft and sticky, and his coat sleeves, their cool, open mesh acting as a sieve, had let through the rain until the sleeves of his shirt clung to his arms.

As in this plight he entered the elevator the uniformed youth in charge took down from where it had been clamped between wires in the cage's

lattice side, a square, white, unstamped envelope, and handed it to him. And Ledgerwood, knowing instinctively that it was from Nerissa, though he had never seen her handwriting, tore it open then and there with his still wet fingers. The message it contained was strangely brief:

"So sorry, but circumstances make it impossible for me to see you this evening."

Eight o'clock was the hour of their tryst. It may have been a quarter of an hour later when, driven home by the storm, he got her note. It was midnight, or within a few minutes of it, when his telephone rang. And during all the interim he had been sitting in his wet clothes, near an open window, while the rain descended, the lightning flashed, and the thunder crashed, crackled and roared. Sat there, blind and deaf and insentient to the elemental rage and to its passing. Sat there still when the downpour had ceased and the moon had emerged from among the ragged, retreating clouds high above the tree-tops of the park.

III

AND the thoughts of Ledgerwood in those hours were intolerable thoughts. The "circumstances" of the message was a word pregnant with significance. He gathered in an instant the horrid truth that lay behind it. There was but one thing which could have provoked that hurried reticence. He—the creature whom she had once so anomalously called her "friend"—was with her. Had it been otherwise she would surely have guarded his mind against this very conclusion. It was as though framing the sentence thus, she had meant him to know. She had flung out, as it were, a plea for his sympathy. And in what abundant measure he gave it his absorption and his misery testified.

The ordeal through which he pictured her passing was no greater than that through which he himself passed.

His disappointment became now a minor matter. Anxiety over the uncertain would merely have abraded, whereas this cut to the bone and beyond it—to the marrow from which springs the heart's blood.

It is a wonder he heard the telephone at all. He didn't at first. It had been ringing for almost a minute before his ears opened to the sound. Yet it must have won him subconsciously before that, for there entered his mind a hope, so faint and seemingly futile that he hardly dared welcome it that she might in her extremity seek his aid. And then he was conscious of the ringing. Then, for the first time, he actually heard it.

He was not surprised at her voice. He would have been surprised had it been another's. He expected, though, that she would be agitated—hysterical, perhaps. Yet she was not so in the least. She spoke very calmly in a low, even tone, without even a sign of quaver.

"Would you very much mind coming in to see me for a moment?" she asked.

It struck him suddenly then that he had had all his anguish without cause. After all, she must have meant that she would explain the "circumstances" later, and was in too much haste to do so in the note. It made him feel rather sheepish. Still, if it was not to-night, it was sure to be, later. Sure to be, that is, unless he did something to prevent it. And rather than go through a repetition of to-night's experience he was ready, just now at least, to do almost anything to prevent it.

His straw hat he found was still damp and sticky, and then he remembered his wet clothes, which had partially dried. But he never gave a thought to changing. He was too anxious to get to her—too anxious to be quite reassured—for that, even though she had said nothing about haste.

Nerissa opened her door for him before he could ring her bell. She had evidently been listening for the ascending elevator. She opened it without showing herself until he was inside;

and then he saw that her hair was not dressed, that she wore a kimona of pale blue with silver embroidery, obviously over her night-gown, and that she was strangely pale.

The only light in the passage came from the drawing-room at its end, whither, without a word, she led him with rapid steps. And there, in the full glare of the electric, he noted that as well as being pallid she was worn. Pain and strain alike were manifest in her compressed lips; and it rushed in upon him, now that he had been right after all. For in her usually calm eyes he detected, in spite of her palpable effort to mask it, a mortal horror—a mortal fear.

She had paused with her back to the closed folding-doors which divided the room they were in from the bedchamber beyond, her hands behind her, her fingers nervously clutching at the glass knobs. It may have been that she feared again to trust her voice. At all events the only preparation she granted him was in her look. And then the doors parted and slid back, and Ledgerwood saw.

Impulsively, suiting his action to the movement of the doors, he had advanced a couple of steps, even as Nerissa, with face averted, had recoiled. The change of position had brought him within a dozen feet of the bed, so that he looked down upon, rather than viewed laterally the livid face and stark figure of John Stansfeld.

For a long moment Ledgerwood stood there motionless, save for an involuntary twitching of the fingers, his brow lowered and creased with a frown and his jaw muscles hard and swollen in answer to rigidly clenched teeth. In the welter of thoughts and emotions, whirling in mental turbulence, he recalled, juxtaposed between the exposition, that day at the luncheon table, of this man's charitable purpose and his hollow dissemblance regarding his anxiety to be with his ailing wife, his own prescience as he noted the false teeth between thin, laughing lips. The lips were parted again now, and the teeth, fallen

together, gave to the expression of the dead purplish face an added horror.

But there was another recurrent thought which rose above all the rest, sweeping them down and back, possessing him, holding him in a grip of fear so grim, so dire, so unendurable, that the mere fact of sudden death and the possibility of exposure were trivial beside it.

"Some day I think I shall kill him," Nerissa had said.

No longer was the dead man the one compelling thing in those connecting rooms. It was the woman, now, who had usurped his place. And Ledgerwood turned to her. She had crossed to one of the open front windows and stood there, half hidden by the curtains, drinking in great, long reviving breaths of the night wind, cool and fresh after the storm.

He went to her and laid a tenderly caressing hand on her shoulder. There was just one thing of which at that moment he felt certain. He was convinced—supremely convinced—that between them there could be no concealment. With him from the first she had been frank to a fault. In her extremity it had been him she summoned. Whatever was the truth she would tell him. And she would tell him unasked.

Nerissa turned at his touch. And he saw then that the strain and the pain of a minute ago had given place to a relaxed gravity and composure. It was she who spoke first.

"You knew him," she said.

It was neither a question nor an assertion, yet seemed to combine a little of each. There was enough conviction in it to startle Ledgerwood, who had determined for the present at least to preserve the fact of relationship. Now he chose the middle course, asking in turn why she thought so.

"It was part of our compact," she said simply, "that I was to tell him everything. I told him of you."

"And he said—"

"He said nothing. But—he acted so that I was sure. He—he seemed frightened or angry. I couldn't just tell

which. All his blood appeared to rush to his face. I thought he was choking, and ran to get him some water. When I came back he was lying there, just as he is now."

Ledgerwood breathed a sign of relief, which bore with it a prayer of thanksgiving. It left behind it, though, a sense of contrition since he felt that momentarily he had wronged her.

"You sent for a doctor?" he asked, and was further relieved to learn that she had not.

"I wanted to spare his family," she explained. "His poor wife, his married daughters. Besides, it would have done no good. It was quite clear that he was dead."

He remembered what she had said about "chance or fate" revealing the double life of this old man she so loathed, and he reminded her of it.

"But he's gone to his judgment," was her reply. "It's only those that are left who would suffer. In some way we must hide it. That is why I asked you to come. I'm sure you can suggest something."

Ledgerwood was sure he could, too. He had thought it all out in the first second or two after the recognition. He was thinking of something else now. He was thinking how wonderfully, to use the turf phrase that occurred to him, "Nerissa was running true to form." He was thinking that the thing on the bed there, having made no provision for her while he lived, and not daring, for his own name's sake, to provide for her in his will, Nerissa was once more without an assured future. He was thinking too of his agony of the evening. And he was telling himself that if his own recently regained peace of mind was not again to elude him it would be well to make sure from now on, indefinitely, there should be no more interruptions of their Wednesday evening trysts.

There was no time just then, however, to think it all out as it deserved to be thought. That must come later. And come later it did; after, with much

finessing, the body of John Stansfeld having been clothed and hatted, aided by the elevator boy, Ledgerwood bore it upright from the apartment to the street, into a taxicab, out again and up to his own apartment at the corner—a very ill and unconscious old gentleman—who died in his son-in-law's rooms, before a physician could arrive.

The thinking out spread over several days and the waking hours of several nights, and was concluded on the Wednesday evening following the funeral, when, seated on their own bench in the park, Ledgerwood told Nerissa of his carefully mapped-out plans. He even showed her some of the railway and steamship folders he had procured. For his idea had boiled down to a trip around the world for them both.

"We'll take a year to it," he said, happily, "or two years, or just as many years as you like. And there'll be no obligation on your part. You may call yourself—and I'll call you—my sister, or my niece, or my cousin, or whatever you choose. That will be until you think you know me well enough and—if a such a thing be possible—love me well enough, to be my wife."

Nerissa's surprise found expression in an uplifted and protesting hand. Marriage had never entered her mind. "I—I couldn't," she said softly. "I'm ever so grateful. It's noble of you. But I can't let you. I'll be anything to you—everything, I'm—" her voice dropped to a whisper and her words faltered, "I'm too—too—"

There wasn't a being in sight, and whatever the word was Ledgerwood smothered it with the first kiss he had ever given her. When he released her his face was wet with Nerissa's grateful tears.

He knew her and he knew her story. He knew, too, that whatever it was she had wished to say, it could have borne no weight with him against one demonstrated fact.

In spite of her past, in spite of everything, her soul was still virgin. "As white as heaven."

FACTORS

By Wyndham Martyn

IT was half past eight of a Winter's evening when the butler brought Richard Linfield's card to Mrs. Hartington. For a few moments she was undecided whether or not she would see him. It was ten years ago that he had left his country for the Orient and in each one of them she had thought of him. Very often she conceived him to be the one ideal of a youth that was not so far distant as time measures lives, but so far as feeling went, was co-existent with lithic ages.

As the man stood there awaiting her decision, she was not sure what she ought to do. At eight-and-twenty she was wise enough in her world's ways to know that even illusions have their uses. Ten years ago Dick Linfield had been a clear-eyed lad with that touch of the romantic that appealed to her at eighteen. Should she see him and lose this image? Ten years in the Far East brings rapid changes. Most women would go to the devil in that climate in a decade. And most men take to drink. She was about to tell the man that she was at home to none, when curiosity triumphed. At least she told herself it was curiosity. She found herself desiring to see Dick more than she had ever wished to see anyone.

When the butler had gone from the room she went to a mirror and glanced at herself almost anxiously. Dick, too, might have remembered her as he had left her, a slip of a girl with all the unconscious magic of her eighteen years. Well, she had kept her figure and her skin was still unusually good. On the whole she had little reason to be dissatisfied.

And when Linfield came into the room she felt her fears as to his physical deterioration groundless. He looked older, and more tired, and there was that pallor which speaks of the enervating heat of the Orient, but he smiled at her in the same ingenuous manner that she remembered and he had not grown gross of figure.

"How long have you been back?" she asked him presently.

"A week," he told her, "a week of bitter disillusionment. I've come back this time for good. I have been promising myself that I would try to take up the threads of life where I left them."

She shook her head. "One can never do that. I've tried. The threads you want to weave now never harmonize with the old pattern. Tell me your disappointments."

"My sister Mildred was one. You remember how pretty she was and how glad I was when she married Charlie. I lunched with them to-day. There may be some hope for a woman who has taken to drink, but there's none when she's taken to eating. She has built up something of a reputation for exclusiveness, Charlie told me. In reality, it is, she has blacklisted the dinner tables of her friends who have bad cooks. I feel I never want to see them again."

"It was your own fault," Joan Hartington reminded him. "You should know we all change. You can only understand your friends when you know the interwoven things of their lives which make changes natural. I'm sorry for Milly. Her great disappointment is that she's had no children. It may

have driven her to eating. That's only a way of passing the time."

"You haven't changed very much," he said, looking at her closely. "You're more beautiful than you've ever been. You used to have such a thin neck and you never did your hair as well as you do now."

"In those days I did it myself," she answered. "But it's of your disillusion I'm anxious to hear. I'm by way of being a specialist on them."

"It's my old home that has disappointed me. I've thought of it a million times out there in the eternal sunshine as the sort of place I'd like to retire to, a cool place guarded by the trees that were my friends. I went up to the Cape to see it on Tuesday. Of course it was never a pretentious house. My great-grandfather who built it was a New Bedford whaling captain, but he need not have made it so square and ugly or given it such a narrow door or such mean windows. The people who live in it have cut the trees down, and the great rock behind, which we children called the pyramid, bears a sign of an enterprising photographer, and there are no flowers to be seen."

"It can be altered easily enough," she said.

"I'm afraid not. I can't banish the trolleys that run within thirty feet of it, and I can't tear down the shacks that surround it." He sighed. "And I used to think about it so often! One ought never to go back. We should send others to place flowers on the graves that are dear to us."

"This is all very depressing," Mrs. Hartington observed, smiling. "Are all your disappointments as bad?"

"There's one other," he returned. "I'll tell it to you out of shame. Out in the East one can't put behind one the memories of home. Sometimes the most absurd likings persist and worry one by their recurrence. You remember that my father and mother, although well off, lived quite simply in the old-fashioned New England way. I think poor Milly may be sampling rare viands because of the tasteless stuff we had.

On Saturday we had beans and Boston brown bread. On Sunday morning tasteless balls of thirst-provoking dried fish proclaimed the sacred day. Once a week we had a New England boiled dinner. Joan, it's a damnable dish. It scents a neighbourhood for hours. But do you know, out there where one couldn't be obtained for love or money, I began to hanker for a boiled dinner. I tried it to-night at a restaurant where it's a sort of specialty. The look and the odor sufficed. I left the waiter not only a tip but a dinner. Other people liked it. There was one—he was a type you would detest—looked at me as though I were crazy to reject such a dish."

"How do you know the type of man I detest?" she demanded.

"This one was the kind that has the bulging fat neck; the sort of neck which gets jealous of the ears and tries to push them off his face. They stood out red, fat, protesting, grotesque. He looked as if he had eaten a boiled New England dinner three times a day since birth. Don't you suppose I remember you well enough not to know the sort of man you dislike?"

"Ten years ago you did," she corrected.

"I believe I do still," he asserted, "I'm not going to be as disappointed in you as—as in other things. I came here to-night to find out."

"Then I am sandwiched between a gray house and a boiled dinner, is that it?"

"You know differently from that," he said gently.

"But you persist in thinking of me as you used to know me ten years ago," she protested. "Don't you understand that I have altered as much as you?"

"I suppose so," he admitted after a pause. "You must have attracted a hundred men by your beauty, Joan, while I've been dreaming about you out there in the East. How many dozens have told you that you were their first and only love?"

She smiled. "How well you know your sex!"

"How many have you believed?"

"None," she told him.

He looked at her a trifle anxiously. "Then you never believed me when I told you that?"

She flushed a little. "I should like to have believed it of you."

Linfield tried to recapture something of those far-off days when he had been almost inarticulate in her presence, lacking courage when most he needed it. She had not believed what with most is the immemorial lie, but with him, then at least, was genuine.

"Sincerity is very much overrated," he declared presently. "Perhaps it's only the art of being honestly dull or of boring a woman with the truths she does not want to hear. I wonder if you save yourself much by believing so little?"

"Of course," she laughed. "I conserve my emotions for the moment when I shall really find the truth. I don't know how credulous you are out in the East, but here in New York we assay our acquaintances very carefully and sometimes are rewarded by a tiny speck of gold. This story of yours about a dinner seems rather preposterous. Am I to believe it?"

"It's a confession. I'm ashamed of it. I am doing penance. It shows to what depths a man may fall who designed in youth to be a poet."

"Ah, yes," she said slowly, "you wrote verses then. Did you ever write any to me?"

"I wrote them all to you," he cried. "I wish they had been better, but even love can't make a man a poet."

"But you've met women out there that inspired you. You probably hadn't much to do but make love—and write verses. Exactly what had you to do?" she demanded.

"Trafficking for strange webs with Eastern merchants, diving in deep seas and trying to keep the fallen day about me."

"No more?" she asked.

"Writing verses as you suggest to the women who have inspired me."

"I suppose you filled volumes?"

"I should have done had there been sufficient inspiration. Ah, Joan," he sighed, "if only you had loved me!"

"What then?" she asked him.

"All the world would have been ours."

"And now?" she returned.

"Well, for my part I've made a mess of things. I wanted love and money. I have money. Apparently you've made the double success, so I ought to be happy."

"And who told you of that?"

"The world."

"Then it must be true," she said ironically.

"Joan," he said in a lower tone, "I have all these years been thinking that you were entirely happy. I have never met Hartington, but Milly says he is a splendid fellow and you are ideally happy."

"Your sister approves of my husband's cook," she observed quietly. "Perhaps she is right and that we are an ideal pair. Probably we are."

He looked at her, not understanding. "I wish I knew what you mean."

"It wouldn't be profitable," she assured him. "Tell me about the East."

"I went there because you sent me."

"You went to join your uncle, who was established in business at Hong Kong."

"What had I left to wait for here?" he demanded.

"You had me," she answered and looked away from him into the cedar logs that glowed in the fireplace.

"No," he said, "that was the one thing wanting. If only you had loved me!"

"I did," she breathed gently. "Dick, that all happened ten years ago, and I may tell you now. I knew I loved you. That last night when we met. It burst on me so suddenly that I was afraid for myself. I realized that I was yours to do with as you desired. I knew that if you had told me to come with you I would have left my father and my mother and been content to work for you all my days. And so, when you spoke I was dumb and you thought I

did not care, and you went. If you had only looked back you would have seen my arms outstretched."

"Then that letter you sent—" he began.

"Which you sent back unopened. Yes, that would have told you, Dick."

"The years that are wasted!" he said dully. "The love I tried to simulate toward other women—the years and the love belonged of right to you."

He tried to bring more clearly to his mind what these years might have meant to them both if she had but spoken or he but turned back. The cynic in him tried to whisper that it would have been but the first of the many passages that mark the love life of a man. That the flame would have died down long ago and that their passion would have turned to ashes and from their intimacy the little quarrels would have arisen which lead to disillusion. But as these doubts crossed his mind there was born the certainty that such thoughts were false. This woman of all women had been designed for him. For him those warm lips had been so delicately fashioned and those arms so daintily moulded. And to have lost it all! Some lines in one of Arthur Symonds' poems wrote themselves on his brain:

*We were two ghosts that had their
chance to live,
And lost it—she and I.*

Presently, master of himself, he turned to her. "My dear, it has all turned out wrong and we must blame poor, inexperienced youth for it. You've been able to make a better thing of it than I. I did not marry. There were women, sometimes, but I could not marry. It would not have been fair to any girl to look into her eyes and see only yours."

"Why have I done better?" she asked passionately. "Have women never married men they care little for because the man they loved has left them? Would that be so strange?"

She ceased rather abruptly as though ashamed of having said so much.

"Is that what you did?" he demanded.

She resumed her lighter character. "I didn't say so."

"Somehow I have always thought of your husband as a strong, kindly man who understood you and would be silent when you wanted to think, and amusing when you were dull. A man who could watch over you and be attentive as older men can be to the women they love. Who's Who told me he was twenty years your senior."

She rose to her feet and held out her hand. I don't think I want you to meet him, Dick. I—I don't think you two would get on very well. You would find it hard to understand him—and me. Please go, Dick, before he comes. He may be back now at any minute."

"You mean you don't want me to come and see you again?"

"I think you'd better not." She turned her head toward the window. "That might be his motor. "She walked to the bay and looked down to the street.

"Is it?" Linfield asked.

She nodded her head.

A minute later Hartington came in. As the name meant nothing to him he greeted Linfield with condescension, the air that sits graciously on a millionaire. If, later, Linfield turned out to be a man of wealth, condescension could be changed to a highly cultivated cordiality and all would be well. "Any old friend of my wife is welcome," he declared, and was glad that Linfield's tailor was a good one.

He turned to his wife, "As it happens, this is not the first time I have seen Mr. Linfield." He wagged a fat and facetious finger at his guest. "That young man left one of the finest New England boiled dinners you ever saw at the Cambridge Eating House this very night. I watched him and he didn't eat a mouthful. Just smelled it as if it were tainted."

"I discovered I was less hungry than I thought," Linfield explained, "and the very odors are filling."

"That's why I'm not allowed to have it in my own house," Hartington laughed. "You did what no man ever did before, you left a boiled dinner pre-

pared by a chef who can't be bettered at 'em. The waiter was all upset till he saw the size of the tip you left him."

"One must expect to pay for one's illusions," Linfield returned.

"It beats me why you left it," Hartington pursued. "I said to the waiter, 'William, that man must be in love.'"

"I trust William was satisfied with the explanation," the other said politely.

"He surely was," Hartington declared. "He was your age once. He hoped the lady would be amenable to reason." Hartington had a coarse and ready wink. "I added my prayers to his. Most things I've observed come to the lavish tipper."

"I hope your prayers will be answered," the younger man replied. "It would make a great deal of difference to me if they were." He turned suddenly on Joan Hartington. "What do you think about it? Am I going to have good fortune or ill?"

Mr. Hartington, busied with unlocking a humidor, gave little heed to the question or its answer. He was in peculiarly jovial mood. To-night, at supper, he was to meet a very young but

experienced person whose demure looks had long attracted him and whose pursuit had been more than common costly. His own prayers were shortly to be answered and he was in a mood to be generous when others sent theirs winging to whatever gods there be.

Linfield repeated his question. "Shall I have good fortune or ill?"

This time his host, moving toward him with an opened box of cigars, caught the question.

"Shall you have good fortune or ill?" he quoted. He put an arm about his wife's waist and winked knowingly at Richard Linfield. The sensual leer accompanying was hid from the woman, but Linfield saw her slight, beautiful body shrink from the contact and try to draw away. "We are all entitled to the pursuit of happiness," the jovial Hartington elaborated, "you just as well as me. Sure you'll have good fortune. I wish it and so does my wife. Don't you, Joan?"

She looked at Linfield with eyes that answered, but her husband was not to be denied.

"I wish it, too," she said.



THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND IT

By W. F. Jenkins

PEOPLE do not understand her. She has, to outward seeming, always lived a sheltered and luxurious life. Never, as far as even her most intimate friends are aware, has she had cause for mental anguish. And yet her expression is that of an embittered woman, her speech marks her as one who has known. She has written poetry, and every line bears the impress of a soul that has suffered; she has made speeches to women, and the broad understanding of her words has shown the depths of emotion to which she has been moved. Her friends cannot understand where she acquired her wide experience. They think there must be some secret sorrow in her life.

There is. She is constantly being mistaken for a servant girl.



HIS OWN WORST ENEMY

By Robert Rudd Whiting

HE had not been shaven recently and there was a faint odor of stale liquor about him. As he shakily mounted the crumbling brown-stone steps he had an uncomfortable feeling that someone was following him. Couldn't he have peace even in his own house—the only place, the only thing, that was still his? He stopped. The footsteps behind him stopped. With a jerk, he turned. No one.

The sound of his latchkey in the lock set his nerves a-jangling. As the slamming of the door echoed through the old house, it seemed to him that all the doors of everything had suddenly slammed shut. He felt his way along the dark hall. He paused. There *was* someone. He *felt* someone. Closing his fingers around the revolver in his pocket, he tiptoed into the long, high-ceilinged parlor, and peered into the darkness.

Ah! a silent, crouching form seemed to mock him from the far end of the room. He shuddered; then, with an effort, pulled himself together.

"Well!" he demanded. "Well!"

The stranger, too, had straightened up, as though to meet defiance with defiance. Stranger? As his eyes became accustomed to the dim light he found something hauntingly familiar in the bloodshot eyes with their dark circles; in the sneering, loose-lipped mouth.

"You!" he snarled, with sudden recognition. "You, who have hounded me all my life—fought me at every turn. You, who dragged me down when success was within my grasp, tempted me when I was weak. You, who set my wife against me, caused even my children to turn from me with loathing—You—But now, by God!"

The other man was as quick as he. The two guns flashed together. A crash—

Heart failure, the doctors said. There could be no doubt about it. As for the revolver still clutched in his hand, and the jagged hole in the long French mirror at about the height of a man's heart, they think he must have involuntarily pulled the trigger as he fell.



THE most serious problem of the maiden is how to be wise enough to know all the blush-cues and yet remain able to blush at all.



A MAN is mature when he begins to be thankful that the ambitions of his youth were never realized



WHAT LOVE DID TO MR. SMITH

By L. M. Hussey

METAPHYSICAL dilettanti, and, of course, the savants will recognize with very little reflection the name of Ladislaus Smith. In addition to his singularly novel tone, "The Metaphysical Interpretation of the Mabinogion" and his numerous contributions to the *Hibbert Journal*—who forgets that tilt with Sir Oliver Lodge of two years' duration in those pages! — the philosophically inclined will never fail to remember that it was Smith who first translated Henri Bergson into Esperanto and so gave the speculations on Time and Free-Will and the flux-flow idea and the Essay on Laughter to all the world for all time.

Not a few of the interested have no doubt at one time or another scanned Smith's counterfeit as shown in the newspaper half-tones. A lesser number must have seen the man in the actual flesh, as for many years his assuetude was to stay at Atlantic City during the summer months and he surely was pointed out more than once, musing on his bench at the far end of the Steel Pier, and oblivious, it seemed, to all save his speculations. What an ascetic the man surely appeared to those folk inspecting him there! Thin, as an ascetic should be, gaunt almost, later bearing on his face a gigantic incongruous beard—and they would think of his renunciations and how little, as his unfashionable whiskers told, he cared for the conventional estimates of men. His hirsute abandon became in some minds indeed a symbol, a representation of his fine philosophic carelessness. Ladislaus Smith, they thought, does not even know, perhaps, that these hairy wilds

hide his envisagement from the world—yet think of the sentiency behind them!

Yet when Smith, the Bergsonian philosopher, was a slightly younger man he had no beard, and like other and more common men, he fell in love with a woman.

His initial meeting with this female was had in the Peabody Museum, at Yale, where he happened to be inspecting a Patagonian *Edestosaurus velox* and other of the thousand-odd mosasaurs to be witnessed there. Someone presented Cytheria, and young Smith at once conceived her an unusual girl. His reasoning was, naturally, that few maidens entertained any interest for the Mesozoic era, and its reptilian fossils, and that one who did had a singular personality worth cultivating. Under the circumstances, he had no manner of understanding that Cytheria entered the museum because it was hot outside and cool inside, and because she was tired and desired to rest. Moreover, he did not at the first meeting realize that the girl named significantly after one of the Venuses knew rather more about the profundities of man-capture than the lore of the Jura-Trias and Cretaceous remains.

When Smith visited Cytheria, it is to be said in her favor, she made no effort to pretend a geologio erudition. He very soon found that the girl lacked not only an acquaintance with his scientific hobby, but also with his *arbeit*, his philosophers. His primary interest in her had been the presumed unusual trend of her brain. She possessed none of this presumed intellectual predilection, he found, and still he multiplied his

visits to her. She had aroused another and different interest.

Cytheria indeed at once struck what was for her designs a fortunate chord. She played a set of fondling notes. On his very initial visit to her home she ventured a little group of caressing physical contacts. With seeming accident she would permit her hand to touch him and the touch to dally. She played heavily with her eyes and twice she observed him blush. When he took his leave she retained his hand pointedly longer than the conventional usage. He left her with his senses tingling.

It was certainly not further than the third meeting when Cytheria steered the dialogue to the topic of his hair.

"Why do you wear it combed straight back?" she inquired.

Smith didn't know why he did.

"I would rather see a little part on the side," she said.

"The next time I come I'll be sure to have it arranged that way," he assured her.

"But I want it that way now!"

And she very daringly adjusted it to her desire. She took his head in her hands and produced a hand-fashioned division in the left side of his profuse locks, smoothing down the hair with many soft lingering strokes of her hands. This kind of treatment reduced the philosopher's senses to a crapulous delight. He had read the woman-spectics, but had never believed them. He was far from misogyny. He more than a little in truth worshipped the sex feminine and had prints of a Giotto Madonna and Raphael's Madonna of the Chair hung in his bed-room, which he took to be typical of all womankind. These of his characteristics entailed the obvious corollary that he had never known a woman intimately in all his life. He was rapturously bemused by Cytheria's pettings. He felt the purring instinct of a stroked kitten. And he fell, as she so astutely intended, in love with her.

Had Smith, the coming savant of metaphysics, proposed matrimony to Cytheria the day she parted his hair

with her hands, she would have accepted him and through no material reason but because she was already in love with him. She had contracted her erotomania the time he talked to her in the museum. The man she had seen then was not handsome, nor a male of heroic proportions and yet she had sickened with a fondness for him. It is very questionable whether she could have penetrated to the *whys* of this attraction. She chose Smith for her mate after the manner fantastic and reasonless of all women, when they marry for love. She demonstrated in herself the exquisite drollery of the eugenic hope.

Smith himself would have proposed to Cytheria the day she parted his hair with her hands had it not been for two things. In the first instance he was going at once to Paris to sit at the feet of Bergson and having made arrangements felt he could not remain behind now for matrimony. In the second, and more powerful place, he had scarcely money for a wife. He was dependent for his future financial betterment on the expected demise of a relative. This had unfortunately not yet occurred. So he told Cytheria he was leaving for France.

"You will write to me?" she asked, pleadingly.

"Always," he said with fervor.

And when he left her he almost kissed her.

He went to the French capital and listened to the suave Bergson in his crowded lecture rooms and talked personally to the maestro and planned his great translations into Esperanto. And he wrote constantly to Cytheria. The frequency and regularity of her letters was almost as if she lived in the same city, and every one he answered. For three years he corresponded with her. The letters very quickly became sprinkled with a nomenclature of endearments; before the first year was out there were frank makings of epistolary love.

Smith had begun his celebrated controversy with the English physicist and

president of the London Society of Psychical Research, when his relative died and left him decently well off. He was in the very midst of demonstrating that the Lodge Bergsonism was not the veritable Bergsonism, and that Lodge insidiously dragged in the Frenchman to support his spirit-rappings and ghost-raising all without authority—when the news came. He determined at once to return to the States. He could continue his contributions to the *Hibbert Journal* from the other side of the Atlantic—and he could get married. He wanted intensely to marry Cytheria.

On the pier, as he made his landing in New York, Cytheria met him. Nervously he had been wondering just how he should greet her. A hand-shake seemed cold and yet . . . She dissolved the difficulty in an instant. She put up her lips and he openly kissed her.

"Dear," he said.

"Sweetheart," she murmured.

They dined together and spent the day together and talked long realms of talk. At some place in nearly every sentence she addressed him, she called him "Sweetheart." It struck him presently as perhaps a too lavish use of endearments.

"You must not spend all the nice words at one time," he told her.

"Don't be afraid, Sweet-honey," she replied.

Thereat he sighed and resigned himself to saccharine profligacy.

They were married within four days and passed a honeymoon in the region of Smith's birth. They wandered over the hills of southern Ohio and into the mountains of northern Kentucky and West Virginia. They saw two men killed in a shooting scrape at Catlettsburg, explored the Big Sandy river and its curious inhabitants, observed the Ohio ferry pilots picturesquely curse the timber raft crews and made constantly an aggravated and violent variety of love.

Smith discovered Cytheria's esthesia stupendous. Moreover, she was esthesiogenic and he found in himself an unex-

pected capacity for feeling, which she brought out. She petted him, fondled him, stroked him and kissed him. He was in paradise for a little more than a month. And then he received a belated copy of the *Hibbert Journal* and remembered Sir Oliver Lodge and the metaphysical contentions. They returned East, where he could write.

But upon him there came an unexpected impediment to writing. They settled in apartments in which was arranged a special study-philosophical for him. The first morning he sat there pondering, he was aware of someone tip-toeing into the room and seizing him from behind, a pair of hands over his eyes.

"Guess who?" she asked.

"You must not, now," he told her.

"And do you mean that you are going to shut yourself up here like an old bear in the winter? I'm not going to let you, Sugar. You must come right out *now* and talk to me . . ."

"But, no, Cytheria . . ."

"No 'but no's'! You'll forget all about me in here alone. You don't want to forget all about me, do you? Positively, you mustn't forget all about me."

She made him make love to her at all odd hours. At first he submitted. The ravishment to his senses did not wane immediately. He would kiss her reluctantly and finally with passion. But he could not progress with his labors under circumstances of this sort. The philosophemes which he felt it his destiny to announce, remained only half sketched in his notes. And with a progressive increment his conscience jabbed him. He was first the philosopher it told him, and after that only incidentally the married man. He began to wonder if all married men passed through experiences of the same sort. It was too bad he had no male confidants with whom he might discuss his dilemma. They might have been able to suggest something.

Cytheria's growingly distasteful amativeness eventually led Smith into an open but futile declaration.

"There is a matter I must say to you, Cytheria," he said.

"I love to have you talk to me, dear,"

He ignored this.

"You know, I'm a philosopher . . ." he began.

"Silly old philosopher," she teased, giggling.

Her remark destroyed all the carefully balanced arguments he had mentally formulated. The dispassionate presentation of his case fled from his consciousness and he broke out vehemently.

"Confound it, Cytheria!" he stormed. "Don't treat me like a tooth-cutting infant! I've got work to do. I can't waste all my days the way they've been going. There's got to be a time for things. There've got to be hours for work and hours for play around here. And in the hours for work, you've got to keep away from me. I can't be mooning around . . ."

She put her hand over his mouth.

"Don't talk that way, Silly-sweet," she said.

And she kissed him.

It was not the last time that he attempted argument. But the successive failure of his most strenuous polemics convinced him presently of this method's futility. He suffered a term of bewilderment and then caught the notion of rendering himself in some way very physically unattractive. He conceived this a possible manner to lessen her affection. For a time he was puzzled over the accomplishment of this design. He did not specifically know how to go about it. He thought of strange hats and singularly tailored garments, or perhaps an exotic hair-cut. But none of these fancies appealed to him as adequate. There was a dubiousness about them, both in the manner of their efficiency for the desiderate effect, and their practical comfort. It was nothing to him that he might look strange to the world, provided there resulted the consummation of a less amorous Cytheria, but he did not wish to make himself physically uncomfortable. A singular suit of clothing might distract

him and prove worse as a remedy than the disease.

Indeed, an accident indicated to the philosopher the possible cure. Quite by chance his wife mentioned a distaste for bearded men. He resolved immediately to grow a beard. But on reflection he bethought himself that an instant execution of this purpose might not result as happily as he could wish. The process of growing a beard is not an overnight enterprise, but a matter of weeks. It occurred to him that for success he should by some means arrange a separation, for an interval, from his wife in order that he might appear before her suddenly, and extensively hairy. He was afraid that should he grow the whiskers under her daily inspection she might become used to them even before they reached a useful magnitude, so gradual would be the appearance. . . . But he was in a quandary to devise a scheme to leave his wife. . . .

Through pure fortuitousness he was offered his opportunity. Cytheria's mother, dwelling in Washington, developed a dangerous illness and the daughter found it at last necessary to go to her. Smith seized his chance and altogether abandoned his razor. Out of his face there appeared at first a reluctant stubble and then there followed a swift enlargement, like mushrooms springing up out of the vacant sod.

Her return he rather nervously awaited. He began to fear that the measures might be in truth too strenuous. It was not his desire that she should be utterly turned from him. On the morning when she was expected he perceived a complete inability to work. He tried indeed composition in his study and finding this impossible, attempted to read. But even the "Critique of Pure Reason" failed to divert him. He ended by pacing the room. . . .

When she came in she stopped suddenly and the expression of joyous anticipation at first clearly perceptible on her features took on an unmeaning immobility. She stared at him. And he said nothing but inwardly he was ac-

cusing himself and even cursing a little. He would shave off the wiry mess. . . .

And he saw her face beam. She ran, almost tripping on the rugs, and threw herself upon him.

"Handsome!" she exclaimed. "How dear of you to grow them. . . ."

She stood off a second and observed him.

"It makes you look," she said, "like some heroic old viking. Oh, I *adore* you in the beard! . . ."

Smith was too dispirited to shave off his whiskers, even though they increased his ardent appetite. Again he found effective work impossible. For a time he battled against the only possible solution which now presented itself—the practical, sure solution that he had resolutely refused previously to entertain, substituting a bizarrerie. . . . But at last he knew he would have to leave his wife.

He did not plan a complete separation. But what he did was to acquire a small secret apartment in another section of the city, a place where he could work. Any intimation of the location of this he zealously kept from her. And to it he would disappear for days at a time.

At first she pleaded and nearly melted him with tears. He was susceptible to this weapon, yet some fortunate hardness at the moment saved him. Presently she stormed. This he could endure with greater ease. But he always returned to his work-place. He seemed to breathe a new air when he walked into the little book-lined rooms. It was a retreat from dalliance. In no way could idle philandering enter here. He completely forgot the obvious suspicion that in time she would inevitably follow him and discover his haven. . . .

The day she walked in upon him as he sat thoughtfully writing upon the conflict of transcendental ideas, he flared into a red anger. He ejected her with physical violence.

"Get some other man," he yelled at her, at the crest of his heat.

And she herself blazed at this taunt.

"I will!" she cried, and slammed the door upon him.

He went back to his cogitations but apprehended in a moment that he was wholly unable to labor further. He wandered about morosely all day, sat saturnine on park benches and consumed whiskey at several bars with an atrabiliar scowl. The confounded woman, he thought, had shredded his nerves for the day. But unfortunately his estimate was far too conservative. The following day he felt no better. Again work was an impossibility. And he went to bed at night befuddled with alcohol.

The third day he arose with an inactive liver and a slight headache. He ate no breakfast, but gloomily thought about his wife. Suddenly the notion came to him that she might do just as he had told her. Suppose she did find another man? But what right had any other man with his wife? Should he discover her with some sneaking fellow. . . .

He fired acutely with jealousy. Almost, he felt sure, she *had* found someone else. Perhaps she was with someone now. . . . He ordered his silent Japanese servitor to get him his coat so viciously, that the close slant eyes widened a trifle. He burst out into the street and jumped into a taxi.

She was at home when he blundered in. There was no one there and a wave of relief surged up to him. Yet he felt it necessary to ask her.

"You had a man here?" he demanded. "You have been with any man?"

She regarded him curiously, her face a little set.

"Yes," she said, "only last night a man kissed me."

Then it was true!

He felt himself another and different person. With a manner of horrified detachment he perceived his hands clutching at her throat and choking her. He saw her face go a dreadful hue and watched her gasp and pant. And suddenly he dropped his hands and she sank into a chair. He had not killed

her. But none the less he was terrified. At last he had estranged her forever. There could be no reconciliation after this. And at once a measure of the ardour of his early married hours came back upon him.

But he found she was speaking. She had in the beginning some difficulty to articulate the words; her throat had

been so brutally constricted. Only after a struggle could she establish control over her vocal apparatus.

"Ladislaus!" she said to him weakly, but vibrantly, and her eyes glowed as if in them were lighted a fire. "It was terrible, but it was wonderful. . . . I don't care if you kill me. . . . Love me like that again! . . ."



IN A GARDEN

By E. M. Nelson

AS I walked among the paths this morning, plucking flowers, I found, in the yellow heart of a ladyslipper, a little brown bee. My first impulse was to shake him out of his honeyed abode, but as I looked at his velvety body and sunlit rainbow wings a feeling of foolish tenderness surged over me. Perhaps there were baby bees at home that would starve if papa bee did not bring back honey; and how useful the little creature was, carrying the pollen from flower to flower—so I moved on, leaving him unmolested. But even as I turned away, thinking these pure sweet thoughts, the damned thing stung me.



IN PASSING

By Marguerite Wilkinson

I HAVE been washed in joy
 And rinsed in glory—
 I have been clad with life—
 Yea, all the world is new,
 For my dear, in passing,
 Has bent and breathed upon me,
 Warm as the sun,
 Gay as the breeze,
 Gentle as dew!



HEAT-LIGHTNING

By Frances Norville Chapman

THE Bert Tompkinses lived in Brookmount, Missouri. From an aeroplane, on a clear summer day, Brookmount would look more like a seething, fermenting little blot than a town. It lay on the parched, flat breast of the prairie, writhing, twisting, warping beneath the blazing sun which beat down upon it with brazen glare and pitiless heat. Its very name was a misnomer, as no embosoming hills surrounded it protectingly, no brook or river gave character to its dreary sameness. On closer view it was like a face without features, expressionless, yet alive.

People were born there, but why they stayed they could scarcely have told themselves, and of the four or five thousand souls huddled together in half-unrealized discontent, Bert Tompkins, thirty-three years old, part owner of the Brookmouth Hardware Store, and Junior Vestryman in the Episcopal church, was not the least important of its citizens.

The Tompkinses had married young . . . They do in Brookmount. Youth must have some diversions . . . and, after the Brookmount fashion, they immediately dropped out of the social life of the town. However, as Bert was in business for himself and they owned their own home, as they had no children and kept a Ford car, they were, in the vernacular, "doing splendid."

After ten years of married life, the Tompkinses didn't have much to say to each other. Their silences were not silences filled with the sweet, drowsy indolence of companionship; they just didn't have anything to talk about, so

they didn't try to talk about anything. They got along without friction and were, on the whole, contented enough. But occasionally, on these evenings of breathless, suspended heat, they would both get up from the supper table with a restless, agitated feeling . . . they could scarcely define it themselves. Bert would go down town and sit tipped back in a chair with his feet on the railing of the Parker House veranda, and there he would talk politics with some hopeful candidate, or swap good stories with the drummers. Sometimes he would take out his car and ride around town, but there were few paved streets, and after the long drouth the country roads were too rutted and dusty for pleasure driving. If it weren't too hot, he might drop into the movie theatre, where he usually saw his wife down in front with a crowd of "the girls," as she called her married women friends. She went regularly three times a week when the new bills were put on, and she knew all the actresses and actors by name and the different plays in which they had appeared. He never thought of accompanying her home, and she wouldn't have wanted him to, as "the girls" usually stopped at The Candy Kitchen and bought ice cream cones, which they ate as they walked home, together.

Nearly always he would end up at Horsford's saloon where, under the reeling heat of flaring gas jets, he would stand at the sweating mahogany bar and drink two or three beers, which he didn't want; then he would go home where he would find "Mamma," as he called his childless wife, sitting on the front porch "cooling off." If he were

very late, say ten-thirty or eleven, Mamma would be upstairs, sighing and thrashing around on the hot sheets. "You just undress in the dark Bert Tompkins. I ain't going to have this room all heated up by the gas at this time of night," she would scold querulously . . . "Ugh!"—as she caught a whiff of his beery breath.

Of course there were no restaurants with cabarets and dancing floors; no country club, or shaded park; even the ubiquitous Elks had never invaded the monotony of Brookmount. The movie theatre, Masonic lodge, an occasional circus, political rally or the county fair furnished the acknowledged diversions.

Down near the Burlington depot there was a row of grimy little houses that, like some poisonous plants, seemed to drowse all day and only waken at nightfall. Their existence was ignored by the women of the town . . . no man would have thought of mentioning them to his wife; no mother would have hinted at them to a daughter, but they all knew they were there, knew about the mirror-lined walls and crushed velvet furniture, and by unwholesome speculation, exaggerated the vice and glitter that was behind those half-drawn blinds, which seemed to peer up and down the street like little, bleary eyes.

One evening, after a stifling day, when the very skies seemed to hang exhausted and inert, Bert Tompkins came out on the front porch where his wife sat rocking, wielding a palm-leaf fan with languid effort.

"You going down to the Parker House as usual, I suppose," her voice was peevish.

"Well, there ain't anything else to do, is there," he replied with a beligerence he would have found hard to explain to himself.

"We might take a ride. What's the use of having that Ford?"

"The fan belt's broke. It's been too hot to fix it."

"Seems as though we might do something," her complaining voice was almost a whine, and for the first time in

his life Bert looked at his wife with critical eyes. She was a plain woman of twenty-eight with a rather inert-looking face; but it was inertia of soul rather than of feature. With animation she might have been almost pretty. The only real charm she had ever possessed had been the mystery of her youth which had long since been wiped out in the dull revelation of a successful marriage. Tonight she looked pale and drained. She had dragged her straight, heavy hair back from her high, blue-veined forehead and for greater comfort she had slipped on a loose dressing-sack, and as Bert looked at her he turned away quickly, but he didn't say: "She's ugly, she's stupid, I hate her."

He walked along the red brick pavement, which seemed to hold and reflect the midday heat and thought dully: "I believe I'll go over to Kansas City next week."

At the Parker House Tompkins met half a dozen parched cronies who suggested an automobile ride out to a roadhouse on the Utica turnpike. The ride cooled them a little, but the four or five beers they drank after they reached the roadhouse made them warmer than ever and they soon started for town.

As they jolted over the rough, dusty, country roads, a little mist rose from the meadows; it seemed to clutch at the engine, to tangle itself in the wheels, rising in thin spirals, to breathe its dank breath in their perspiring faces.

"I didn't know there was enough moisture left in the ground to raise a fog," someone remarked.

"Look there!" another exclaimed. Low on the horizon broken sulphurous zags of lightning ripped the sky.

"Nothing but heat. Don't get your hopes up for rain," came the discouraging reply.

Bert sat in the back of the car glowering and silent. He did not care whether it was hot or cold, wet or dry . . . nothing made any difference. . . . He didn't know what was the matter with him. . . . Perhaps he was going to be sick. . . . "Mamma's" irritable face with the hair dragged back from her

forehead rose before him. He didn't allow himself one disloyal thought, but he voluntarily banished all thought of her.

As they passed the Burlington depot someone suggested that they stop and "jolly the girls" a little while. Bert started to protest; he was naturally a clean fellow and he had never been inside the place in his life, but some seething discontent stayed the words on his lips, urged him forward.

The rooms were rather stuffy with their strong odors of beer, patchouli and talcum, but Bert thought the plush furniture handsome and the shaded pink lights were restful. A few young girls, rather wilted and devitalized, were trying to laugh with animation at the witticisms of Joe Cheever, the reform mayor of the town, who stood by the piano giving a humorous monologue to which Frank Phillips, music teacher and organist in the Congregational church, played a descriptive accompaniment.

"Good evening," Bert turned to find a slip of a girl at his elbow holding a tray with two foaming mugs of beer, and as he stood feeling rather embarrassed, Joe Cheever called out:

"Go ahead Bert, this is on me."

"Thanks," Bert said awkwardly, as he took one of the mugs. "W-won't you join me?"

"Sure, come on in here, it's cooler."

As the girl led the way into the darkened back parlor Bert noticed how her brown hair clung in little damp tendrils to the slender nape of her neck. Her eyes were big and dark, like a faithful, seeking dog's, and as she turned at the door he saw the little beads of perspiration underneath her chin which gave her a curiously childlike and innocent expression.

They sat down beside an open window where an occasional vagrant breeze stirred the sachet-scented curtains. On either side of the room two electric fans hummed unceasingly. Bert gave a long sigh of relief. It was the first time he had been cool for a week.

They put their mugs of beer down

on the window sill and let them grow flat as they began to talk. The girl didn't say much, but she listened, her dark eyes interested and intelligent. Once or twice they were interrupted by demands for Bert to "buy something," to which he good-naturedly complied, although he didn't drink much himself. Presently he found himself talking, talking as he hadn't talked to a woman since he was courting his wife ten years before . . . He talked about business, his old hopes; told her of dreams he didn't know he had ever dreamed until he shared them with this listening, dream-like girl . . . He bragged a little, blustered, even told her of his election to the vestry; it seems there had been some . . . well, not exactly opposition, but some of the parishioners thought that the older men ought to be given first choice . . . He was so absorbed that he almost forgot that the girl was there.

From the other room stole out the notes of "Hearts and Flowers," as Frank Phillips played it softly. That and "The Rosary" were Bert's favorite selections, and he paused in his talk to listen. Frank's fingers wandered off into a few broken chords and presently one of the girls began to sing in a sweet, thin, plaintive voice:

"Love, could I only tell thee
How dear thou art to me . . ."

And suddenly Bert felt . . . not unhappy, but sad . . . sad, lonely and misunderstood. He gulped painfully. He felt as though he'd like to put his head right down on the window-sill and cry, specially as the girl's soft little hand was patting his as she crooned: "I know . . . I understand . . . I know just how you feel . . . It makes me wanta cry too."

Bert sighed. It was very pleasant and a change from the Parker House verandah or Horsford's saloon. There wasn't a bit of real harm in it either . . . But as he heard the eleven-thirty express from the West thunder-

ing over the trestle, he started to his feet.

"You ain't goin'?" she brushed against him like a scented moth in the dark.

"Yes, I . . . I . . . got to," he said thickly. "You been mighty nice to me, kid, but I got to go now."

"All right," she replied with the ready acquiescence of one who has learned to submit. "Mebby you'll come again some time."

"Maybe," he replied. "It's been mighty pleasant, but I got to go now."

"All right," she repeated, and held up her face. "Kiss me, boy," she whispered.

Bert caught her to him for a moment, but he didn't kiss the upturned face . . . "Don't kid," he stammered.

"All right," came the plaintive little monotone.

"You fellows ready to go?" he asked as he went into the front room.

"Yes . . . Was that the eleven-thirty express? . . . Didn't know it was so late . . . Well, so long, girls," came the replies, but as they clambered into the car, the reform mayor stopped them.

"Of course we don't want to say much about being down here boys. There isn't a bit of real harm in it and when it's so darned hot you got to do something to forget it. If you boys would just turn in and work for that appropriation for band concerts or a little amusement park, it'd be different for all of us."

"Trust old Joe to never miss a chance to get a little electioneering," the driver laughed as he sent the car forward, "but I guess he's right at that." And Bert Tompkins thought, in sudden panic: "I wouldn't have Mamma know for a cool five hundred dollars."

II

AFTER Bert left his wife, she sat rocking on the front porch until dark. At first she thought about getting her crocheting, but her hands were sticky

and it would soon be too dark to see the intricate pattern. She was lonesome, but she didn't really resent Bert's leaving her alone. She had a notion to go to the movies, although she had seen the films now on exhibition, but when she thought of going upstairs and changing her clothes in the stuffy little bedroom, she gave it up. A few passers-by nodded or spoke with half-hearted cordiality, usually with some comment on the weather. "I just wish they *wouldn't*," she thought wearily. "I'd like to have a chance to think about something else." Dave Baxter, the drug-clerk, went past with springing tread, his youth triumphant over the mere discomfort of 104° in the shade.

"Goodness, how can he walk so fast? But then I guess he's taking medicine up for the Blodgett baby. I meant to go up there today. It's awful weather to be sick, specially babies," she thought, as she began to wield her fan. As Dave came back, she called:

"How's the Blodgett baby tonight, Dave?"

"Worse, I guess, poor little thing. Awful weather to be sick, specially babies."

"Why that's the very thing I just said to myself," she exclaimed with a flair of animation.

"Well, it's sure been some scorcher all right, but thank goodness I'm off for the evening. Mind if I sit down a minute to cool off?" Dave smiled his pleasant, candid smile, as he laid his hat on the porch beside him. "Yes, it's the last summer I'll twirl the spiggots. It's awful dull around here."

"Where you going?"

"Chicago. My uncle's going to give me a job on the road. I'm going to have part of southern Wisconsin for my territory; they say it's cool up there, lakes and everything."

"My, that's fine!" Mrs. Tompkins replied. "I'd like to go to Chicago. Have you ever been there?"

"Sure," Dave bragged. "I been there twice. Haven't you ever been?"

"No. I went to Kansas City once before I was married, but I never been

in any other city. I guess I'm a rube all right," she ended with a rueful laugh, and Dave looked up at her and noticed the little soft crease around her throat, like a baby's. Her heavy hair had loosened and formed a dusky halo around the pale oval of her face. He suddenly felt embarrassed, bewildered . . . Was Mrs. Tompkins pretty . . . or was it the shadowy, fading light that gave her face a mysterious sweetness and witchery?

"Well, there's plenty of time yet. You aren't so old," he paid her the doubtful compliment, which she took up like a challenge.

"Yes, I am; I'm older than you anyway." Her voice was caressing, cajoling, she was looking at him through half-closed lids. She felt just like Mary Pickford.

"I'll bet not much," Dave remonstrated.

"Well, a little," she replied evasively. He was nineteen.

For a while they sat in silence, a silence full of conductivities, to be broken by Dave's vehement voice:

"It's a shame . . . a . . . a shame . . . A lady like you! Bert's got plenty of money . . . Haven't you ever travelled *a-tall*?"

Mrs. Tompkins shook her head, realizing for the first time the limitations of her life. "You're the first person who ever seemed to understand that I cared about . . . well . . . all that sort of thing," and as Dave made no reply, she asked: "What you going to travel for?"

"Groceries." Dave was a loquacious young man, and he liked to think and talk about interesting things, and as the most interesting thing on earth to him was Dave Baxter, he was never at a loss for a topic of conversation.

"You know, I got ideals, Mrs. Tompkins. Even in business, we got to have ideals."

"How true! Although few seem to realize it, specially men."

"I know they don't, but it's ideals plus ideas that gets you somewheres."

"You're perfectly right . . . ideals, plus ideas . . . that's good," she agreed.

Thus they talked, each satisfying some inner craving for sympathy, entertainment, excitement until they were disturbed by the deliberate strokes of a clock inside the house.

"Ten o'clock! I didn't realize it was getting so late. I better be going." Dave stirred reluctantly. "It's been mighty nice talking to you, Mrs. Tompkins. You have a way of drawing a fellow out, kind of understanding him, so to speak. Don't you ever let me hear you talk about being *old*; you aren't, you're . . . you're . . . just *sweet*!" She heard him swallowing, as he sat amazed at his own audacity. For a moment she yearned over him, then a sob rose and rent her breast.

"You're not happy," he muttered, "I knew it." His lips were on her hand, his face against her knee, but she pushed him away gently and they both rose to their feet. As she stood on the step above him, Dave looked up at her dumbly. In the thick gloom he couldn't discern her features, but she seemed shrouded in swathings of something loose, misty, white, and she swayed toward him like a wave about to bear him off his feet, but as he sprang to meet her, she floated beneath his grasp and the screen door clicked between them.

"C-can I come up again some evening?" he stammered hoarsely.

"Perhaps . . . We'll see," she smiled enigmatically as he went down the steps.

III

THE Tompkinses had only one bedroom, but if they had had half a dozen spare rooms, it would never have occurred to Mrs. Tompkins to occupy one of them tonight. How many Brookmount wives have lain down at night and felt a grudge harden into hatred through sheer physical proximity. She undressed in the dark which seemed to beat against her like a torrid breath. "It's going to be awful tonight," she groaned, as she felt the sheets which

scorched, as though fresh from an ironing table.

As she tossed about uneasily she thought bitterly, here she was, young, good-looking—a drug clerk had told her so—and yet her own husband neglected her. . . . At least, he never took her traveling. Of course, she didn't care anything about Dave Baxter; he was a silly youngster and she was glad to think that she hadn't given him any encouragement in his silliness, but he did have an understanding far beyond his years. . . . When had Bert Tompkins ever told her she was . . . "just *sweet!*" The little spot on her hand where Dave had kissed her suddenly felt cold, as from a touch of menthol.

About midnight she heard her husband come in, and as he cautiously fumbled about in the dark, she pretended to be asleep. Presently the bed creaked beneath his weight. He sighed lustily, turned, heaved, gasped, reached out to the bureau for a palm leaf fan.

"Lay still, can't you?" she twitched away angrily.

"It's so awful hot," Bert replied meekly. "I thought you was asleep."

"Not much sleep in this oven," she snapped.

There was an interval of silence, a long sigh . . . she heard his even, peaceful breathing. After the manner of men, he slept.

But for a long time his wife lay staring into the darkness. Was this all? . . . This terrible, blank emptiness. "It's t-those little t-things that keep a w-woman young and g-g-good-looking," she sobbed with long, shuddering sobs that shook her heart.

It was dawn when she sat up with a start. . . . She thought she hadn't been to sleep at all . . . but she must have dropped off for a moment. . . . But what had awakened her? She sat hunched up in the bed shivering a little. . . . From the yard below rose the strong, rank scent of earth. . . . a sharp, cool wind smote her face like flying spray. . . . Bert stirred, and she pulled up the light summer blanket and tucked it around his shoulders. . . . He roused a little to reach over and pat her hand as he murmured drowsily. . . . "All right, Mamma." . . . With a sigh of relief and delicious contentment she sank back on her pillow. She knew now what had awakened her. . . .

It was the sound of rain on the roof.



THE COUNTRY CLUB

By Henry Hugh Hunt

LIFE in our community was not always so complex.

Formerly, when I returned from town, my wife was almost invariably at home. She is seldom there now. Since these environs have acquired a country-club I see very little of her. She is constantly at the club, playing golf with men who have volunteered to teach her the game; or else she is dancing with them. They motor her out to the club and they motor her home again. But last night, after a fox-trot, she discovered me in a corner of the club-house verandah, and said that her other plans having fallen through, she would ride home with me in my car.

And dammit, I had made other arrangements!



THE EGOIST

By Paul Steele

HE entered the den like a smothered storm. He had not heard her footfall, muffled in the soft eastern rug. She reached the reclining chair in which he lay extended and bent over him.

He stirred uneasily. His eyes opened, dilated as if he visualized an evil dream. He sank lower in his chair, recoiling; his hands grasped the leathern arms. He gasped her name.

"Margaret!"

"Who is that woman?"

Blankly he gazed up into the tortured flame of her eyes. In torpid obedience to her will, his brain stirred dazedly among the lingering shadows of slumber, stirred futilely.

"What woman?" he repeated dully, while his dawning consciousness writhed with slow appreciation of this horror, the loveliness of her face devoured by the vitriol of jealousy.

"What woman?" she sneered. "Are there so many, then?"

"Margaret!"

He leaped to his feet; with the cry his arms sought her. She slipped away and placed the table between them.

"If you touch me, I'll kill you! Don't you dare to do it!" she hissed.

In her attitude, in the blaze of her eyes there was something to amaze and warn the man. Still it was and deep, a brooding undercurrent of menace.

He stood rigid, his wits for the moment at sea. His gaze appraised her slim beauty, clad in summery white, as if she were a fascinating stranger. And this she was, for he had never before seen her so. Deadly calm, her level

answering look might have been that of Portia dwelling upon the miserable Shylock.

Suddenly Claverly leaned across the table, brown eyes steadily fixed upon her own. His tone was quiet, instinct with the dominance she loved.

"Now, my dear," he demanded, "explain this nonsense! To what woman do you refer?"

She felt curiously becalmed. The gust of her fury had passed like a squall. There welled anew within her all the tenderness, the sweetness of years. As, so often before, she thrilled at his look, at his tone. Even as she answered there flashed in her mobile brunette face the glory of her inevitable love. Her words of explanation were invested with an air of apology curiously pathetic.

"The Ritz-Carlton—you have been there frequently of late with a woman, a blonde, a beauty—"

She faltered at the peal of his hearty laughter as he started around the table. Without resistance she surrendered herself to his arms. His lips sought her own and his laughter died in broken murmurs of adoration.

He sank upon a divan, drawing her with him. His arm clasped her waist as her dark head sought his shoulder. His voice, that long before had lured her to a destiny of divine unrest, caressed her.

"Why, dearest, listen to your silliness! That woman is the coming French actress, Fleurette Lamont. She is about to start *en tour* and I have been helping her with her campaign of press work."

The words recalled faith eager for

restoration. His easy manner banished the last remnants of doubt.

She clung about his neck, murmuring pleas for forgiveness. He laughed indulgently, mingling his gentle mirth with the old assurance she loved to hear.

"There!" he said finally as he gently unclasped her arms. He stood up, looking down at her with tenderness while he held her hands. "Satisfied now that you were a little fool?"

She nodded, nestling her rounded chin upon his hands.

"Never will be that kind of a little fool again?"

She shook her head and raised his hands to her eyes. He drew them away a little abruptly. They were wet.

He laughed again, a trifle forcedly, as he walked toward his desk.

"Just a moment, dear," he said. "I have a matter to arrange. It will take only a little time. This thing has upset me. You won't do it again, will you?"

"No," her rich contralto assured him with soft anxiety. "I'm so sorry! But I was *furious*! Anne Langhorne told me. I should have remembered about your—trouble. You are quite all right now?"

He had seated himself at his desk and sat half turned toward her.

"Yes," he answered. "Anne Langhorne is a cat. You should have remembered that."

She leaned forward upon the divan, her hands clasped tightly.

"Forgive me!" she implored him. "I know. I met her at luncheon. She told me. I scarcely know how I reached here; I was beside myself. But you see—I never dreamed of there being—anybody else."

He smiled indulgently as he drew his watch from his pocket. His eyes held hers as he unsnapped the rear case. He spoke with compelling tenderness.

"If ever again you are tempted to doubt me—will you remember?"

Her eyes filled with sudden tears for the dear memory of the day when he had shown her the little picture of her-

self which he had ordered finished, unknown to her, for his watch.

"Always, dearest," she told him brokenly.

She sat silently regarding him. Her lovely face softened, her eyes shone like a young girl's. Had ever wife such a lover? Her man, the man she had made worth while, how could she have doubted him?

An intimate sense of their undeviating love possessed her as her eyes rested fondly upon the splendid head crowned with thick waving hair prematurely gray. She glimpsed the dominant, clean shaven half-profile, the set of the square shoulders as he bent absorbedly over his writing.

A flood of contrition renewed for her doubt overwhelmed her. She rose, starting to tiptoe softly toward him, to approach unseen from behind and put her arms about his neck, as she had done so often.

Midway she stopped. Rigid she stood by the chair where he had been resting as she entered. Upon the floor lay a white object. His name, addressed in a bold feminine hand, stared up at her.

She bent and picked up the square envelope, her eyes suddenly aflame. She looked once toward the man at the desk, oblivious to this grim trick of destiny. Then she withdrew the thick sheet. Her eyes devoured the lines; they were few.

With her cry, like that of some animal in mortal pain, the man sprang to his feet, overturning his chair. He whirled to face her.

He shrank back appalled as she swiftly advanced to him with the letter in her hand. He wore the look of a man who has at last faced Nemesis.

She halted in front of him and shook the letter in his gray face. Her voice was terrible, a strange metamorphosis from the velvet contralto. It was hoarse, nearly indistinguishable, a growl.

"Oh, you liar, you liar!"

"Margaret! I—"

He sprang forward, his arms outstretched for her. He was distraught,

blindly thinking to crush down her just fury.

She struck him with all her power, full in the face. He reeled backward against his desk, clapping his hand to his cheek. He stared stupidly, with gaping mouth.

Now an embodiment of congealing fury, she raved, her voice scarcely louder than a whisper. Her restraint of tone rendered her anger the more lugubrious.

"Oh, God! You beast! I gave you my honor; I have given you my life. I thought you were mine. I found you broken and I mended you. I led you to success; I dreamed for you as a wife and a mother and a sister all in one; I worked for you with heart and soul and mind. *I could have made you great!* What could you have done without me to show you the way?"

He threw wide his arms in grotesque despair; his voice was a harsh croak:

"Nothing!"

"Nothing! Oh, you parasite! You have *used* me; you have builded yourself upon the ruins of what you found! All I asked was your love. Take it back, the lying treacherous thing, with *this!*

She flung the crumpled letter in his blanched face. In this supreme moment he was proved an arrant coward, unable to face the punishment of his perfidy.

He tried to speak; there was an incoherent muttering deep in his throat. He trembled mightily while his look was fixed upon the incongruous nightmare of her accusing face.

Her lips curled in an incredible snarl. Her eyes were like twin flames of hell as she bent forward till they were but inches from his shrinking own. Her white fingers twitched like talons. Her words thudded like blows upon his cringing brain.

"What have I after all the years? This scrawl—'Dearest'—an assignation—'Adoringly, Fleurette.' How you have tricked me—*me!*—and I made you! Only last week you knelt at my feet and wept crocodile tears over the fresh

recognition that had come to you. 'Margaret,' you said, 'it's all through you. You led me through the shadows. But for you I should have died or gone mad, strangled by life.'

"And you went from my arms to those of this French courtesan, this mercenary who will *use* you, as you have used me. Oh, God! let me die! I have paid; I have paid!"

Her voice had risen to a snarling scream. With a mad access of strength she grasped him by the shoulders, shaking him like a leaf.

"God is just!" she cried. "I gave up duty for you. He has made it hell. I am paying—I am paying now! Let me die, let me die! Love? *Love?* What do *you* know of love? Oh, you thing, *I'll kill you!*"

In that instant he crumpled under her hands and crashed down like a tree.

She staggered back, suddenly dumb with a divining horror. The red mists that had swum before her eyes turned to gray.

The menace of years had flashed from the void. Damocles' sword had fallen.

She stood as if transfixed in a cruel dream while the gray valet, summoned by her single scream, scurried into the den. She saw him fumbling the sprawling thing upon the floor. She beheld him turning it upon its back while the limbs dragged aimlessly.

Groaning, she covered her face with her hands. She removed them to find the valet looking up at her with frightened eyes. She heard faintly his agitated voice, as if it had come from the other side of the world.

"Mrs. Claverly! How did it happen?"

"How did *what* happen?" She asked it fearfully. This monstrous thing was a dream; she would waken in a moment.

"He's *dead!*" The valet's face was blanched and accusing.

"No! No!" she sobbed. She recoiled, wide burning eyes fixed upon the contorted face.

"His heart!" muttered the man, gain-

ing his feet. The tears coursed his cheeks. He had loved Sidney Claverly.

There was subdued hostility in his look now bent upon Margaret. He had doubtless heard her voice raised in anger. Doubtless he knew of the other woman. But she was instinctively sure of his silence.

"We were talking," she gasped, "and he—fell. What shall I do, Harkins?"

The old man had seen much of life. He was master of the situation.

"Calm yourself as much as you can, if you please, madam," he answered, "and then you had better go. I found him—so—you understand? I will summon a doctor, later the coroner, and attend to the rest."

Her look had fallen upon the crumpled letter which lay near the body. She took an uncertain step toward it, then stopped short. She could approach no closer to that still thing stretched on the floor. She felt suffocated. She must breathe the outer air or die.

"Harkins," she said, "that letter—on the floor. Will you destroy it?"

He was fighting with his emotion. "Yes, madam," he answered indistinctly.

She staggered from the room, leaving him regarding the body with wet eyes. In the entrance of the apartment facing Central Park she paused for a moment. Despairingly summoning the last remnant of her nervous energy she descended the steps and walked dizzily to a taxicab.

She rode through brilliant sunshine of October, grown suddenly for her as black as the ultimate shadow, to a studio that she kept in Gramercy Park. She held herself erect while her fumbling fingers extracted the key from her handbag. Blindly she inserted it and reeled inside. As the door slammed shut she fell prone upon a divan, burying her convulsed face in the pillows.

He was *dead*—and she had murdered him. Suddenly she sprang from the couch, clenched hands beating at her head.

Then a voice whispered from the Unknown. It told her that this tragedy

had not been of her seeking, that Justice had reached forth to slay a living lie.

But now there came to her flayed being the supreme torture. Memory, a ruthless fiend, stretched her upon the rack. It whispered of poignant tenderness, of the white faith that had lived before this chaos came. Recollections swarmed like cruel stinging bees, now of some recent intimate moments, again of those first days when his voice lured the soul from her body.

In red flashes of retrospect she lived again the ten years gone, from the hour when his first look deep in her eyes had changed her destiny.

Insistently her thought winged back to the dead man. She had found him hopeless; her love had girt for him the armor of faith. It had been incalculably hard, the struggle, and he had won it through her. He had died possessed of international fame as a playwright. His triumphs were only beginning; in his grasp were the world's rarest bays.

What of the compensations? Remorselessly, for the moment icy cold, her mind analyzed the question.

She had grown with him. Her genius matched his own. Her sculptures were shown in the leading *salons*. They were sought by the foremost connoisseurs. She had kept pace with Claverly.

But there was this difference between them. He had grown by her love for him; she through that love. His goal had been his success, as had her own. With divinest impulse her own growth had been only the passionate expression of an indomitable will to help his development. In any issue of their completed mutual destiny, he had his compensation in the fruition of his dream. It had endured, when sorely beset by the destructive forces of life, through her faith in him. It had died with him.

For her, now alone, there was no compensation, not even the dear memory of an unviolated faith.

She started up with a low shuddering cry, staring about her bewildering-

ly. Long hours had passed since she entered her studio. She had battled with sorrow in the black watches of the night. Now, ghostly in the gray dawn, the noble creations of her genius stood about the large studio.

Disheveled, dead-white, she stiffly gained her feet and reeled to the noblest and dearest of these works of her hands, a labor of purest love. It was a bust of Sidney Claverly.

With strained eyes she gazed upon the blank orbs of the marble which critics had given extravagant praise. The emptiness of the cold eyes seemed horrible to reflect the hollowness of the love he had professed.

She had met his need, that was all. He had used her as a skilled artisan would use a tool.

No! No! it could not be true! Aghast she stared at the marble, then closed her eyes to visualize the living face that she remembered.

The eyes of stark emptiness she willed to change to warmest brown, filled with the love light she had known so well. She resurrected the mellow tone, the caressing touch, the meeting of their lips. What a comradeship theirs had been for ten years, while together they had faced and conquered the world!

A low sob broke from her lips. For the first time since he had died the tears streamed down her face. With eyes still closed she stepped blindly forward. Her groping arms found and encircled the marble. Her lips touched it.

With the cold contact, as if her mouth had pressed a dead brow, the dream of the glad days faded. With a gasp she relinquished her burden and stepped back, her eyes flaring incredulous horror.

He was dead!

And in God's name, from what sinister source and for what reason came that whisper from the void? What ghoul mouthed of this devilish nethermost significance of his death, alienated from her who had loved him?

In a flash there had insinuated to her tortured consciousness the thought

of that picture in his watch. She had never seen the miniature of her dark beauty since he had shown it to her two years previously and told her for what purpose he intended it.

He had been wont to draw the timepiece from his pocket, to open it and look lingeringly upon it. Then he would give her a long ardent glance as he snapped the case shut and restored the watch to his pocket.

Only a fortnight previously she had risen impulsively from her chair near his own to step to his side and look with him. He had anticipated her movement, quickly closing the watch.

"Little girl," he had told her tenderly, "it must always be sacred to my eyes. And—you know how it may be with me—if I go first, you must see that it is buried with me, unopened. Will you?"

She had assented, weeping as she had always done at his occasional references to his possible premature death. She had sometimes wondered if he introduced these with the deliberate desire to give her pain. Upon reflection, however, she had always absolved him from this suspicion. He was a supreme egoist, to be sure, but no sane man could be knowingly guilty of such a refinement of cruelty.

But now the jealousy of the preceding day, the monster which he himself had summoned from its age-old lair to destroy him, swept her soul afresh. Her spirit was obsessed with an avid questioning.

Why had he always so closely guarded that precious timepiece? How many women's pictures had it borne since her own miniature had for a time been placed within it? *Whose did it hold now, in that room where he lay dead?*

Her arm swept out with destructive force. The bust of Claverly crashed to the studio floor and lay in fragments.

Now stonily calm, she turned, reaching for her hat. With hurried touches and a dash of rouge she removed the ravages of her vigil. Without a back-

ward look she left the studio and hailed a passing taxicab.

A little later Harkins answered the bell. Margaret stepped into the vestibule of the finely-appointed quarters from which Claverly would soon be carried to his final couch in Greenwood.

Disregarding the old *valet's* involuntary movement to restrain her, Margaret started down the hall. Harkins, with a quick movement, got in front of her. Then she understood.

"There is somebody here?" she whispered low.

Harkins' finger pressed his lips. He gestured toward a sheltered alcove.

Even as she darted into it Margaret heard footsteps approaching through the passageway which led to Claverly's sleeping chamber.

Harkins opened the street door to allow a woman to emerge. In the instant's flashing glance which Margaret gained she recognized Fleurette Lamont from the lithographs she had seen of the French beauty lavishly scattered about town.

That glimpse had shown her that the Frenchwoman must have been a luring rival. Of undeniable loveliness, with superb carriage and beautifully gowned, she looked the vampire, the destroyer of men.

But there was something else, something which caused Margaret's heart to leap in triumph and her pulses to throb madly. The actress's precipitate departure, coupled with the look of her, had brought to Margaret a thrill of intuition.

Fleurette's wet eyes expressed incredulity. Wide with amaze, they seemed looking into the unknown, with unbelieving scorn, almost with fear. There was about her a strange air of baffled defeat. Her lips moved wordlessly.

In an instant Margaret divined that the Frenchwoman, thinking to find her own picture within the watch, had found another.

As the door slammed she raced along the hall to the shadowed chamber. She paused at the open door, leaning weak-

ly against the wall. Gathering her forces, she entered.

Her gaze fell upon the bed with its long white burden. The enveloping sheet had been disturbed.

She groped her way toward the bed. Midway her foot crunched broken glass. She looked down. She picked up the broken watch.

Her intuition was right then. It had been flung there in fury by the other woman. In balked egoism Fleurette, discovering another face than her own, had hurled the watch away and fled the room.

She stood with the watch in her hand while she looked toward the dead man on the bed. Heart, soul, mind, these were a welter of love, of remorse, of futile longing.

After all, *she had been first*. The picture upon which he had gazed so fondly and so often was her own. Fleurette's face had told her so.

Ah, the broken marble in the studio!

Impatiently dashing the tears from her eyes, she found a strange comfort in this moment. Despite this single lapse of his, he had really been hers. For her moment of evil passion that had destroyed him she would be true for the rest of her span. Of his memory she would make a shrine until she went into silence. Perhaps he would be waiting therein for her, and reunited they would mend a broken earthly destiny.

She bent lower over the broken case, accustoming her vision to the dim light, striving to see her picture that she had not beheld since he had shown it to her two years previously before having it inserted in the watch.

Now, at last, as if becoming slowly luminous among the shadows of the death chamber, the pictured face grew visible.

She slowly paled. She questioned her own sanity with stiffened lips. Then she looked again.

Her eyes, wide with horror, looked toward the stark figure on the bed. In a trice, and in a new guise, she beheld the past. The countless stings and

hurts which he had administered—they had not been unconscious. Now, with this broken bit of evidence in her hand, he was revealed as he had been—and he was horrible.

Every wound that he had dealt had been premeditated. Always behind the smiling Jekyll had crouched the sneering Hyde. Carnivorously he had absorbed all that grace and beauty and love could do for him and his appreciation was only a cunning mask. Within there had grimaced a Frankenstein.

As she stumbled toward the door, her face averted from the body upon the bed, awful divination came to Margaret. She knew now the reason for the strange look upon Fleurette Lamont's face, knew why she had flung away the watch in horror.

Suddenly she became conscious of the timepiece still within her own hand. She hurled it into the far corner of the room and staggered out into the passageway.

Odd, half-forgotten psychopathic scraps, heard years before, recurred to her. Linked now in her mind, they formed the damning evidence in this last word of egoism gone mad. This

man who lay dead had better not have lived. In all his world he was of self sublimated substance; all those who served his needs or his whims were subservient shadows—all.

Harkins met her in the hall, rushing out distraught, as Fleurette had been. His face was wondering.

"Open, quick, Harkins!" she gasped. "I must have air!"

She hastened out into the blessed sunshine, hurrying to the waiting taxicab.

"Through the park for a while," she ordered.

She stared blankly for a time at the outspread beauty of nature. The vehicle bowled by the shore of the placid lake.

The smiling surface of the water caught her gaze. Then she seemed to visualize, kneeling upon the green bank and absorbed in the reflection of his face, the master egoist of mythology, the fabled Narcissus.

Margaret laughed harshly, low in her throat, and closed her eyes.

The face which had smiled triumphantly from the watch case, first at Fleurette Lamont and then at herself, was *Sidney Claverly's own*.



ALL HALLOWS

By Lizette Woodworth Reese

MY mother and myself, mid-afternoon,
 Search down our garden walks, if we might find,
 A flower or two kept from the quarreling wind,
 A marigold, a rose bereft of June.
 We cross the lane, and through the crook'd gate pass;
 My mother goes before, and one by one,
 Drops the gay blooms the low, small mounds upon,
 Where lie our folk housed in a little grass.
 We pass the crook'd gate through, and cross the lane;
 In the thumb'd prayer-book, handed down of yore,
 And till the yellow light aches out the sky,
 We read that they who part shall meet again.
 Our old and quiet house shakes to the core;
 Angels, archangels in the dusk go by.

THE OMISSION

By Owen Hatteras

IN the days of the Calif Abdul Hamid (related Scheherazade) there dwelt in Bagdad a man known to his neighbors as John Jones Ali. And the father of Jones kept a kahn for merchants, but to such a bourgeois vocation the son had no tendency. And this did not disappoint, but made proud rather his parent. When he would discover his progeny poring over some great folio he would swell with a tingling satisfaction, for the sons of his friends read not at all, or if they did, perused only obscene legends from the Arabian Nights.

John Jones learned many things as a youth and as he drew close to manhood a definite ideal shaped itself in his consciousness. But he never stated it to anyone and did not even whisper it to his father as the old kahn-keeper lay on his bed in death, but secretly he had determined to become the wisest man in the world. And having the means through his father's will undividedly to attend his ambition, he began first to study philosophy.

And he read Confucius and Laotse and the book of the Christians and of course the tomes of the teachings of Abu Hanifah and Al-Schafei. And coming from the Persian mystics to the Greeks, he devoured Pythagoras, Zenophanes, Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, Epicetus and Plato on Socrates. And after this he delved into Berkeley and Kant and Leibnitz and Hegel and Schopenhauer and Hume and Herbert Spencer and Haeckel and Bergson. And he even read some G. B. Shaw in a philosophic connection because he had once perused an article (by Shaw) setting forth the information that Shaw was a philosopher. And presently he knew

everything about philosophy. But the thought assailed him, "I am an ignoramus in science."

So Jones began with zoology and he learned exhaustively concerning the protozoa, the metazoa, the coelenterata, the echinoderma, the arthropoda, et cetera. He went into bacteriology and imported agar-agar to stew into culture media and carried germs in tubes in his coat pocket to incubate them. Furthermore, he attacked the science of physics and committed to memory the laws of motion, heard of Pascal and saw a voltaic pile. From this he went to chemistry and the eighty odd elements and such names as sodiumparadimethylaminoazobenzenesulphonate. And presently he knew everything about science. But he mused, "In literature I am an ignoramus."

So Jones cast his energies upon the dramatists and it would be folly to attempt a summing up of the playwrights he read. So thorough was his study that to him the playwrights Augustus Thomas and Earl Derr Biggers were as familiar as William Shakespeare and Eschylus. And he read the novelists and did not omit "Pollyanna" or "Their Yesterdays." And following, the essayists and the poets and the miscellaneous writers. And . . .

But before he could learn any more—and he was beginning to wonder what there would remain to learn—the stocks which he held in the Bagdad Railway became worthless and he was left penniless. So in the course of two weeks, because from his erudition he had omitted one item, he starved to death.

He had forgotten to learn how to make a living.

DOBSON'S CHOICE

By John Walcott

OVER the "sheffoneer" hung her picture. On it stood a small graphophone which gave forth, for the hundredth time, a tired and spasmodic echo of her voice. A bunch of mayflowers sat in a shaving mug hard by. The air was heavy with them, in spite of the open window.

The room was six by eight. Dobson sat in the chair under the gas-jet, with his feet on the bed, and stared at the picture and listened to the song. At least that is what any observer who might have glanced casually over the transom would have thought he was doing. As a matter of fact there was no speculation in his gaze, and the smile that sat under his pale crescent of moustache was of the society brand. An elevated train roared by, like a tidal wave above the steady rattle of the street. Dobson heard neither. Nor, when the din lessened outside, did he hear the penumbral gratings and wheezings with which the machine ironically surrounded its parody of the human voice. But then, for that matter, he didn't really see the dingy picture or hear the squeaky tune. His heart was not in the rite, though he had made up his mind to see it through properly for the last time. For this was both an anniversary celebration and a ceremony of farewell.

Two years ago to-night some chance of the box-office had placed him in the seat of the proud above the footlights of the Melodeon. That is, the hour was late, and the house full, and the only seat left was the very foremost one in a little old-fashioned proscenium box which bit a corner out of the battered Melodeon stage. It was a con-

spicuous spot, and Dobson was a retiring man. However, his embarrassment subsided gradually under the seductions of the program. A monologue artist side-splittingly delivered himself. Certain oddly assorted brothers and sisters, who were seven, vivaciously compounded their "musical olio." The Irish comedian thumped his black-faced partner into a condition of humorous insensibility. Jugglers juggled, and contortionists contorted. Dobson lost himself in giggles and applause.

Then she appeared, and he lost everything. He forgot how to giggle, and he forgot how to applaud. He forgot the time and the place. He leaned forward, head and shoulders full in the limelight, fairly on the stage itself—and basked in the sight of her, and fed upon the sound of her. He ceased to be the gent of a gent's furnisher, the meek incumbent of a hall-bedroom in Harlem. The thumping in his breast told him other things than that. And as for her—he sneered later at the program, with its "leading vocal artists of American vaudeville." After all, what did it say about her that was worth saying?

She did a very successful turn, thanks to Dobson. A thousand approving eyes quickly pointed him out to her. Her own sparkled; here was a game to play that never fails. She lost no time in launching herself at him, with preening gestures, and ardent appeal of voice and glance. The clamor doubled and redoubled, and she continued to sing at him, verse after verse, to the enchantment of the audience and of his own confiding heart. Oh, yes, he knew what kidding was. But also he knew Her.

He knew that nothing could be more natural than for her to give her eyes to him, to lean near him, nearer, as the song went on, till her fluff of blonde hair almost touched his agitated arm.

"Some day my heart shall find you,
Some day these lips shall press . . ."

A hand touched his shoulder—the hand of one of his chance companions, behind him in the tiny box—and a voice said with good-natured contempt not untouched with pity:

"Say, old man, you're all right, but you better come along—" Dobson's elbow drove home on a well-meaning chin, and the audience roared—here was a guy you *couldn't* put wise! She applauded him with her eyes, and the song went on:

"Some day you'll answer, Yes!"

On that last note, incredibly high and sweet, her voice broke in an appeal that he could not help understanding. He felt that he alone understood it among all those noisy hundreds. A wild tumult of applause pursued her to the last curtsey. The time came when his ears burned at the memory of it. In fact, it was a blatant and jeering uproar. But it made no impression on him then. Why should it? His head buzzed. He saw stars. He was in love. And it was to him that she threw the parting kiss, to him that she returned, once, twice, and again.

That was what happened the first night, and that, with trivial variation, was what happened the next night, and the next. That seat was his. He had booked it from the grinning manager. He didn't know that they would willingly have given it to him, paid him to occupy it, as a drawing card of rare quality. But what were half-dollars to him in his delirium? Dobson had become a creature of fire and ecstasy. He did but hover a moment on the giddy verge of bliss, before fairly launching himself, and her, upon that delirious flood. Oh, yes, it was funny

—to everybody else. The fourth night he brought her flowers, a big bunch of mayflowers. It happened to strike her fair between the shoulders, and a letter fell from it. People cheered and howled as she snatched it up and hurried to conceal it, property-wise, in her bosom. It was the letter of a Romeo, a Hotspur, a Dobson.

She kissed his hand that night, in making her final exit, to the boundless delight of the house. In the face of a cynical minority-report that it was a put-up job; Dobson had become a feature at the Melodeon, and the enthusiasm of his admirers had steadily increased.

Yes, she kissed his hand that night. But she didn't answer his letter and thereafter was seen no more in that shabby little Heaven. The manager, to whom Dobson was driven in his frenzy, turned him off with harsh words and few. It was plain to Dobson that the world was at an end.

But it was only the beginning of the world for Dobson. When he had managed to stomach the fact of his bereavement, there was still the puzzle of it. Didn't she give him the glad eye? Didn't she take his flowers? Hadn't she kissed his hand, what? Wasn't he her steady?—or just as good as?

Well, of course in the end he had to come to. In a horrible hour doubt grappled him. Suppose she didn't really care at all? Suppose it was just a jolly? This was when the hilarious racket of the theatre began to ring in his ears; the congratulations of his neighbors, the whistles and cat-calls of the gallery. Somebody had slapped him on the back repeatedly. His fists clenched impotently at the memory. Through it all, it appeared, he had done nothing but grin like an idiot. The manager had told the truth. It was nothin' but a sideshow, and he was the freak.

Those were hard days and nights for Dobson. Gent's furnishing became a matter of total indifference to him. His

usefulness behind the counter waned and ceased to be. But somehow as he wandered the streets in the days that followed dismissal, he got a new grip on himself. Probably the wonder of her face in a stationer's window, and the miracle of her voice in the graphophone of a Penny Arcade had a good deal to do with it. Whatever common-sense might say, *they* told him she was still his own—his to adore, anyhow.

II.

"Some day my heart shall find you,
Some—m—m—cr-k-k-k—z—z—"

The song tailed into nothing with a rasp and a squeak and a dying groan. Dobson woke from his reverie with a start. His face flushed, and he glanced with instinctive apology toward the picture. Such a thing couldn't have happened a year ago, or even a month. His hand mechanically reached for the key.

Then he, Dobson, being awake and in his right mind, withdrew that hand.

"Not on your tintype!" he said distinctly.

He kicked a box from under the bed. He dropped the graphophone into it, without ceremony, as one drops a too-tuneful cat over a railing. He tossed the picture on top, slapped on the cover, and kicked the box back under the bed. He put the bunch of mayflowers in his buttonhole, and went out whistling.

He found Kitty on the front stoop.

She executed a little sidelong movement that drew him to her magnet-wise. Kitty worked in a music store, and lived in the down-at-heels mansion in upper Harlem, which (for a consideration) harbored Dobson and other unattached or semi-detached souls. She knew all about Dobson's romance. He had told her surprisingly soon after their acquaintance began. For some time her sympathetic interest poured balm upon his wounded spirit. It is something to figure as a hero of romance, if only in the eyes of your sister, or your second-best lady-friend. Kitty's voice was satin, and her eyes

were pools of Heshbon. If the truth be told, she was not very pretty, and I doubt if she was much younger than Dobson himself.

He duplicated the sidelong movement, and was at home.

"Well?" said Kitty. Dobson knew the inflection. She was inquiring for further symptoms. She had a way of holding him to the mourner's seat.

"Cooler out here, ain't it?" he remarked, with attempted casualness.

"Some," she answered innocently, but he felt her eyeing him.

"Here!" He tossed the mayflowers into her lap. She stiffened a knee, and they rolled off down the steps.

"Not for mine," she said quietly, but with a tang in her voice he didn't recognize.

"Why not?"

"You got 'em for her." Her tone implied somehow that no funeral baked meats were going to adorn *her* marriage table. But she added, quickly, "She wouldn't like it."

"Who says so? *She* wouldn't care."

"How do *you* know?"

"Well, she give me the kibosh, didn't she?"

"She had to."

"Why?"

"Why?" She seemed to consider the matter reflectively, then turned on him: "Oh, you make me tired. Can't you guess why?"

"No."

"Well, suppose she was—sore?"

"On me?"

"No, on herself."

"Well, she wouldn't be so dead stuck on herself for being stuck on me!—what *she* was."

"Ashamed of it? She'd have needed be that—I don't think—what *she* was."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, I just mean—you can't tell. Maybe she wasn't very good. Oh, I don't say bad, but——"

"She was good enough for mine, see?"

"Well, I don't know about that, either. Maybe *she* didn't—or did! May be she was used to—having the boys

around, you know, and being pretty free—"

"You don't know her."

She let slip an impatient laugh. I'm giving a guess—and so are you."

"Not if you've seen her."

"I guess I got a notion what she looks like."

"The hell you have."

"What she really looks like, I mean. Maybe that was one thing—"

"One think what?"

"She got sore about—afterward. They're all made up."

"Huh! you've got another guess. Some of 'em have to. She didn't."

"Oh, didn't she?"

"Nah, she didn't. Anyhow—it wasn't her looks—"

But here Kitty broke loose.

"Well, then," she cried, "for the love of Mike, what was it?" She put her hand on his shoulder, and kept it there, firm and policeman-like.

"See here, Johnny Dobson, it's months you've been handing it to me—and me passing up the plate for more—all about this—this bum show-girl. Well, it's all off."

Dobson shook off her hand.

"All right," he snarled. "Cut it out, then!"

"There's something coming to me first. You've got to tell mother the truth, the whole truth, and nothing much else, if you know what's good for sonny. What did you go and get nutty over a girl like that for, if it wasn't her wig and her paint and the rest of it? Oh, she made up all right, all right. And she couldn't sing such a much, either. Melodeon!—"

"Come home, come home to mother,"

"And all will be forgiv-un! —"

Dobson cut short the burlesque with a groan, but she went on remorselessly.

"Oh, well, say now, what do you think? What d'you s'pose she thought of you breaking loose like that—flowers and letters, and all, and the whole Bowery stringing the pair of you? Maybe she wanted to be wanted by a good square dub like you—maybe she hungered and hankered for it. But do you

think she could take it from you? Wouldn't she know it wasn't her you cared about, but just some silly thing—her shape—or the happy eye she gave you, like as not, to please the gang. Oh, yes, she'd do that, even if she thought you was all to the merry—she'd have to, if she was onto her job. And that was maybe another thing she got sore about, after awhile—the way she'd have showed your letter to the other girls in the dressing-room, and they calling for the drinks on her! I know."

Dobson sat dumb. Her voice changed.

"So you see she broke away. She had to shake her contract with the Melodeon to do it. That queered her with the push, and next thing she'd left the stage. I guess she'd had all she wanted, anyhow. And then you had to get bubbles. You weren't what I'd call little bright eyes when I came on deck. But you cheered up. You're cheering up right along. I guess you only need one thing, and it isn't her!"

"No," said Dobson, with an air of injured thoughtfulness. "It's you." He did not stir.

"Oh, I'm much obliged, I'm sure."

"Hmp!"

"Well, but don't get so excited. I'll call mother."

Her irony failed to budge him.

"Thank goodness it ain't my hair or my eyes, anyhow."

"No," said Dobson, truthfully.

"And will that be all?"

She was every inch a saleslady, Kitty was; as she leaned a moment above him, escaping his tardy hand with a skilful flip of skirt, and vanishing with a sound which Dobson, as he sat on there pondering, found it hard to analyze. But then the whole business was hard to analyze.

Half an hour later Kitty's voice hailed him from the window of the parlor on the second floor.

"John!"

"Hm?"

"What you sitting all alone there for?"

No answer.

"John!"

"Hm?"

"I'm sitting all alone—in here."

With an upward oath he annihilated space, to find the door held firmly ajar.

"Kitty!"

"Tell me first!" came a whisper from behind the door.

"What?"

"Is it me?"

"You, what?"

"Me and not her?"

"Of course it is."

"Sure?"

"Oh, for God's sake, Kitty—sure—sure!"

"Then wait a minute—till I say."

There was a quick rustle, and the room flared bright.

"Now!"

"My God!" He fell into a chair.

For coquettishly poised under the central blaze was a ghost, a chimera, a dead thing out of the past; a girl with

blonde hair, fluffy skirts, and victorious eyes, who even as he gazed speechless, lifted up her voice to him in the familiar refrain:

" . . . Some day she'll answer, Yes!"

But when, an instant later, the incredible phantom had hurled herself into his arms with excuses and caresses, and, it may be, a little self-complacence, he remained stiff and stony, regarding her with stern aloofness, in so far as the arms around his neck and the hair in his ear permitted.

For the man in Dobson had arisen and was conscious of its first duty.

"Kitty," he ordered bluffly, to the obligato of her delighted laughter, "You go and take them things off, paint and all. Bughouse, that's what you look. And don't you let me hear you singin' them slops no more!"



EFFICIENCY

By P. F. Hervey

BOGGS had a motto, a word to guide and lead him, the which he called "Efficiency," sounding the name in a lordly rumble, slurring and slighting no syllable.

Boggs was his own horrible example: From business, from love, from toil, from pleasure did Boggs extract the charm of occasional failure, for Boggs was very efficient.

One day he slipped in a gutter and fell plump in the path of an ambulance. . . . It halted and took him along.

When, at his swift recovery, against all expectation, a friend observed: "It's a miracle that you escaped death," Boggs lifted his solemn eyes and solemnly answered, "Nonsense! If death had been my object I would, of course, have fallen in front of a hearse." . . .

Yes, Boggs was very efficient!



VENGENCE is the word "justice" written in short hand.

THE GOLDEN LIGHT

By Cora A. Matson Dolson

A ROOM
And here Eleanor
Flooded with sunlight;
In morning robe,
Her golden hair
Loosened
And rippling down
To her ungirdled waist;
Eleanor
Watching her goldfishes,
Where a ray of sun
Slanting through globe and water,
Burnishes their sides
As gracefully they dart
Among the fronds
Of floating seaweed.

Near to the open lattice
Rise the tall straight stems
Of golden-hearted lilies;
And above their perfumed crown,
In his clean cage,
At morning bath,
A slender linnet
Dips his yellow wings,
Plashing the drops
Of crystal water.
Pausing, he lifts his bill,
And swells his throat
In a burst of song.
To amber lights
The curtains sway.

Now Eleanor's eyes
Turn to the mirror's face,
And meet the light
Reflected from their own clear depths;
Then down
To her slim hand,
Where gleams
The ring of gold
He placed there yesterday.



THE SQUARE GUY

By Thyra Samter Winslow

ALFRID FARLEY was a square guy. He admitted it himself. "Yes, indeed," he would say, slapping you heartily on the back the while, "I'm on the level. I'm a square guy, that's what I am. Ask anybody. I've been buying from the same people for years. Just ask them, they'll tell you. Treat me right and I'll treat you right. I'm square."

Farley was about thirty years old, short and rather stout, with a reddish face and pale eyelashes.

Mattie Grant felt that she was mighty lucky to get a position with Farley when she heard how square he was. Mattie was a little, pale, round-faced girl from up-state. She had round blue eyes and a lot of straight light hair. Mattie was a typist, and, because there was no one up-state who thought about her much, one way or the other, she came to New York. Mattie didn't come to New York with any great notions about gaining fame or even fortune. She came because she couldn't get much of a position up-state and because she had read a lot of things about how fascinating it was to live in a big city. She was a pretty good sort of a girl.

In New York Mattie was lonesome. In the little town up-state, there had been homes where she could drop in for supper. Here, in New York where supper-time was dinner-time, she had to eat alone in cheap restaurants. After dinner, if one can call a twenty-five-cent meal at Child's dinner, even at dinner-time, she could afford to go to the movies, some nights. She knew every one of the stars by name and knew what companies they were in and she was very fond of some of them.

The nights she couldn't afford the movies she'd buy an evening paper and in her little back bedroom would spend almost an hour reading about the newest things in chiffon evening clothes and how society women were helping the nations at war and the whole page of comics. On Saturday afternoons and on Sundays she'd go for walks, looking eagerly into windows, or read magazines or do a little washing or mending. Her life wasn't quite as full of gaiety as you'd expect it to be—living in New York.

Alf Farley had a little "custom tailor" establishment on a side street. Because he was so square he did rather well. He kept the same customers year after year and got a new customer occasionally. He didn't advertise and he didn't try to enlarge. He sent his customers postcards on special occasions—Mattie addressed them—and he didn't mind carrying your account from month to month, if he knew where you worked and knew you would pay him after a while. He was square to you if you were square to him.

Besides addressing the postcards announcing the Spring and Fall openings and sales, Mattie had charge of the books, showing Farley's accounts and the accounts of the charge customers. She wrote letters and did the other necessary office work. Besides Mattie there was a cutter named Charley. Farley gave the sewing and the rest of the tailoring out to foreigners who came in each day to deliver or call for bundles. He paid them each Saturday, carefully, painstakingly, seeing that no one was cheated even a penny's worth.

Mattie had got the position at Far-

ley's through a newspaper advertisement. It was her third job in New York and by far the best. Between jobs she had learned how hard it is to get along on nothing at all, and she did all she could to keep her job, now that she had it.

At first, Farley had paid little attention to Mattie. He had given her the place because she looked neat and eager. He liked the way she worked and had increased her eight dollars a week salary to nine at the end of four months without being asked. Farley was a bachelor and his only other relative, a married brother who lived and worked in Brooklyn, he saw only every three or four weeks. There were three children in the brother's family and they were young and cried rather frequently, so Alf went there only when his brother telephoned him to come out to dinner. Then Alf always took the children a few cheap toys or a box of department-store candy.

It was after he had given her the raise that Farley began to notice Mattie a little. It was only natural that he should notice her. His friends were always talking about women and telling stories about affairs they were having. Farley had no women friends. He was never much at home with women and never knew just what to say. He saw that Mattie was pretty, in a quiet way, that she was polite and neat. He was rather a thick, stupid sort and that was as far as he could analyze.

One day, especially, he noticed how fresh she looked in a pink and white shirtwaist—he liked pink. That evening, at five-thirty, he said, almost awkwardly, and yet, with what he considered a most elegant manner.

"Miss Grant, couldn't you stay down town this evening. I'd like to take you out as my guest to dinner."

Mattie's heart skipped a beat or two. She had had only two dinners with men in New York. One was with a man who had taken her to a cheap place to eat and had said things that showed the sort of man he was. It had been

quite unpleasant. The other dinner was with a man from the little town upstate. He wasn't accustomed to eating in restaurants and that hadn't been much nicer.

So Mattie and Farley had dinner together that night and one night during the next week and then nearly every night for two weeks more. It was a new era for Mattie. She mended and washed her simple little waists nearly every evening when she got home, so as to look neat and attractive. Mattie found Farley rather heavy and slow, but she didn't usually dislike anyone, and she was grateful to him.

Farley felt himself quite a devil of a fellow. He realized that, in his position, the successful owner of a New York store, he could have had dinner with nearly any girl he wanted, a chorus girl, even, but Mattie was pretty and neat and he had heard richer men, men whom he liked to think of as prominent men-about-town, saying things about going out with their stenographers, and winking after they said them. It was the right thing to do, evidently. Weren't the papers always full of stories about men and their stenographers?

The dinners continued and they were accompanied by visits to movies and cheap vaudeville. Mattie was quite contented. But, Farley was, first of all, a business man. He felt that he was wasting his time and money. So, after thinking it over, one evening, as he was taking her home from the movies, he suggested casually—he had made love, in a clumsy fashion—that they take a little flat somewhere.

II

At first Mattie thought that he meant matrimony. He soon disillusioned her. To have an affair with his stenographer, even going to the lengths which he now suggested, appealed strongly to Farley. To settle down to married life with this same pale little girl didn't appeal to him at all. If he ever

did marry, though marriage had no especial charm for him—he thought of his brother and the three whiney little babies in Brooklyn—he hoped to marry someone who could help him along in a way that Mattie Grant could never do. He even had social aspirations of a sort. He thought of a comfortable club and people in on Saturday nights to card games, and crowds of six, perhaps, going to the theatre together, with little suppers afterwards. No, Mattie could never further him socially. His ideal was a wholesale woolen man's daughter, perhaps, or even the daughter of a successful salesman for a wholesale house. He met these people every day and he did not know that he should not mix business with pleasure. Why not—wasn't he a modern young man, well thought of with his own business in New York? Wasn't he a square guy?

Mattie, of course, felt badly when she found that Farley did not mean matrimony. She left him rather suddenly and cried for a couple of hours until she had a headache and her eyes were red. Then she thought things over. If she didn't say yes, it meant giving up her position. It meant weeks of hunting for something to do, and lately, she had spent every cent of her salary on clothes, so as to look as nice as possible while with Farley. So, being without work would not be pleasant.

But there were also other things. She remembered the lonesome evenings before Farley started taking her places. She remembered the long Saturday afternoons and the endless Sundays. Life had taken on a more golden color since Farley had been kind to her. Then, too—a little flat. She longed for a home, where she could cook, if she wanted to, where she could have room to wash out things, to fuss around.

There was the moral side, of course, but that seemed unimportant, somehow, in New York. There were so many thousands of people and she knew none of them. No one cared about her. No

one knew what her morals were, even now. There weren't even village gossips to point fingers at her. Other girls did worse things than that. She didn't love Alf Farley, but then, she didn't love anyone else, either. She didn't even know anyone else, in the whole city, unless you call knowing people talking to folks you pass in rooming-house halls or to Farley's customers.

The next day Mattie was at work again, tapping out monthly bills on the typewriter, when Farley came down. Both she and Farley knew that her being there was a sign that the little flat wasn't very far off.

Farley came over to her and patted her on the shoulder.

"It's all right," he said, "it's all right. You be good to me and I'll be good to you. You be square and I'll be square. You know me, I'm a square guy."

Farley found the flat the next week. There were two rooms, a kitchenette and a bath. The combined living and dining room was furnished in fumed oak and over the worn leather on the backs of the chairs were little "tidies" of imitation tapestry. The walls were covered with figured wall paper. Neither Mattie nor Farley were sensitive about decorations. Mattie gave notice at the rooming house and packed her little round-cornered metal trunk and her imitation leather suit case. Farley gave up his room-and-bath "bachelor suite" and they moved in.

There was nothing startlingly romantic nor immoral about the whole procedure. Mattie continued to work in the office as a matter of course. She got a cook book out of the public library and was a pretty good cook. She made the breakfasts and occasionally the dinners. At lunch they ate near the store and generally they took dinner at an inexpensive restaurant in the neighborhood. Farley usually spent the evenings at home with Mattie or took her to the movies, though sometimes he attended a meeting of a lodge of which he was a member.

Once in a long while, Farley brought

a man up to the flat for a visit. On these occasions, he introduced Mattie as "the little girl," with a self-conscious air. Mattie cooked and served dinner and Farley usually told some clownish jokes that he would not have told if company had not been present. After the evening was over, he was always conceited and a bit nasty, being certain that he had appealed to his friend, usually a business acquaintance, as a sport.

On the whole, though, the arrangement was rather comfortable for both of them. Mattie kept the house neat and comfortable and was quite an economical housewife. Farley lived cheaper than he had for years and that appealed to him, and he enjoyed having a home.

Farley didn't give Mattie her salary any more, but, because she didn't like to ask for money, she didn't say anything about it. He gave her enough money to run the flat and she was able to dress quite nicely. She didn't try to save anything. Outside of Farley's beliefs that he was mighty bad, they were like thousands of other middle-class little couples in the thousands of other cheaply furnished little apartments in the neighborhood.

Farley's attitude when the occasional caller was present—there were perhaps half a dozen callers in the first six months of the establishment of the ménage—hurt Mattie. She knew she wasn't a good girl and it worried her quite a lot, but she didn't think it was right for Farley to act the way he did. Farley had a bad temper and she hated quarreling. This attitude, however, became more noticeable. One day, as they were leaving the flat together, a customer of Farley's passed and Farley pretended not to see him and almost hid behind Mattie in order to avoid being recognized. Another time, Farley left Mattie on the street to talk to a woman he knew. Mattie waited, wondering if he would call her and introduce her—and saw him walk away with the other woman. She went home unhappy. That evening, he told her

that the woman was a sister of one of his customers, he had met her a few months before and that he "couldn't very well introduce you, now could I?"

So Mattie had her unhappy days and wondered if it wouldn't be best to get out, but then, when Farley was good natured, she had her happy days, too, so she stayed on. On the whole, Farley was pretty good to her. Wasn't he a square guy? After all, she wasn't much, living as she was. Maybe she deserved the way he acted.

III

THEN Mattie met Lee Cargill. An old customer brought Cargill into the little tailoring establishment and Lee ordered a Spring overcoat. He was slender and young, perhaps twenty-four or five, with thin, light hair and a thin, sensitive face. Mattie noticed him right away and caught her breath. He was different. He came over to give her his address and to arrange with Charley for a fitting on the overcoat. She noticed that he spoke with a slow drawl and had a slow, almost sarcastic smile. She liked him.

When he came in for the fitting he walked over to her desk.

"How's the girl?" he asked and smiled. Mattie smiled, too.

"Fine. Pretty near Spring, isn't it?"

"Bet it is. I almost heard a robin this morning."

He smiled again. Then Charley came for the fitting. The coat was sent to him. Mattie was afraid Cargill would not come in again, but he did, a week later. Something was the matter with the lining of the coat. Farley was out buying some findings, so Cargill told Mattie about it and Charley was summoned. Cargill strolled over to Mattie's desk again.

"Is there any objection to eating lunch with me?" he asked, without any prelude.

"Why, I—don't know." Mattie looked around. Then she remembered that Farley wouldn't be in until the

afternoon. She and Farley never went to lunch together. Farley ate first, while she and Charley remained in the office.

"Do you have to ask the boss before accepting an invitation to lunch?" asked Cargill, as he noticed her.

"No, only I'm not accustomed to accepting any."

"Well, start now."

"Maybe I will."

So she told Charley she was going out and she and Cargill had lunch together.

She had never eaten anything that tasted so delicious. Cargill told little jokes in his pleasant drawl and told, too, little personal things, about a book he was reading, a play he had seen. All through luncheon in Mattie's head buzzed the thought, "I oughtn't be here. Alf wouldn't like it. Mr. Cargill ought to know the kind of a girl I am. I oughtn't be here." She consoled herself with the thought that she would probably never see Cargill again.

Cargill walked part of the way back to the office with her. He didn't try to make another engagement nor did he ask her where she lived. She didn't see him again for three or four weeks, though she thought of him nearly every day.

Then he came in to order a suit. Spring had really come. After he had selected the material, he strolled over to Mattie's desk again. Farley was busy marking down the order, but, as his customers frequently stopped to say a few words to Mattie, he paid little attention to it.

"Do you work on Saturday afternoon?" asked Cargill, abruptly.

"No," said Mattie.

"This Saturday, are you busy?" Mattie wanted to say something, wanted to tell him that she had no right to go places with him, that she and Farley—but she couldn't. She was too happy over the invitation. She remembered that Farley was going to Brooklyn on Saturday afternoon for a visit to his brother's family. There was a

birthday party for the oldest little Brooklyn Farley and he had promised to be present. Mattie had stopped at one of the department stores at noon to buy the necessary present, a cardboard game this time.

"Me, I'm not going to do anything."

"Good. You'll meet me then. Where? Here?"

"I'll meet you at the drug store, on the corner, at half past one," she said, "unless that's too early."

"Right-o," said Cargill, "one thirty is just exactly right for me. We'll have lunch together, so don't eat."

Farley watched him as he went out. Then he went over to Mattie.

"That fellow get fresh?" he asked.

"No," said Mattie.

"Well, you tell me if any of these fellows do get fresh. They may know how things are, between you and me," he added importantly, "and feel that they can butt in and say things. You just tell me if they start anything. I'll fix 'em. I treat you square, I do."

The day clouded. She was nothing after all. She wasn't a decent girl, for a fellow like Cargill to invite places. Maybe Cargill did know. Maybe he would say things, too.

That was Thursday. Friday passed slower than other days. Saturday morning dragged on. Farley left at one.

"I'll be back tonight about ten and bring you a piece of the birthday cake," he said, "don't get lonesome. You could go to a movie or something if you wanted to."

Mattie felt more wicked than she had ever felt before. She had never acted such a lie to anyone. But at half past one she was powdering her nose and smiling at the memory of Cargill's slow, pleasant drawl.

He was there, at the drug store, waiting for her. He was handsomer, she thought, than her favorite movie hero. They ate lunch in the drug store, sandwiches and a cool drink, seated at the counter on little high chairs. They took a bus up Fifth Avenue and then took

a long walk down Riverside Drive. For dinner they went to an old little table d'hôte restaurant that Cargill knew about. Some of his friends were there, two young men and a little black-haired girl, younger than Mattie, who was twenty-two. They were all introduced and sat at a big table and told good-natured jokes and laughed a great deal. Mattie had to pretend a sudden toothache in order to get away without exciting suspicion. She got home just half an hour before Farley did.

Mattie began to think and, when you are twenty-two and start, suddenly, to thinking, it isn't easy or pleasant. Mattie thought her little problem out over and over again. She knew she was in love with Cargill. Whether he loved her or not or cared for her at all, she didn't know. She knew she was in love with him. There was Farley. Could she tell Farley and get out? She couldn't bear to think of telling Cargill. She felt that she couldn't live with Farley any longer, under the circumstances, and yet— She thought and thought about it but, because she was rather weak, perhaps, and all alone she stayed on one week, two weeks, another month.

She saw Cargill only twice that month, one time he came in to ask her to go to lunch with him, but Farley was in so she said she had an engagement. The other time Farley was at lodge meeting and she accepted Cargill's invitation to go to the theatre. It was a musical comedy and for weeks she hummed the tunes from it.

This wasn't right—she knew that. This playing double was worse than anything she had ever done. She didn't know what else to do—how to go about doing anything else. She knew that if she told Cargill she would lose him. She knew Cargill. He, too, was from a little New York town and his family had been narrow enough to consider her actions unforgivable. He felt the same way. She knew by the way he acted, the things he said. All of the things he said were clean things, nar-

row. He didn't know much about the world and yet he doubted it, doubted because he wanted to believe. Mattie knew that if he found out about the life she was leading he was lost to her. She didn't blame him for feeling that way. On the contrary she felt that his feeling that way made him better, more lovable. Yet, if he didn't find out—

After the evening at the theatre, she tried to make plans to leave Farley. She wondered if she could get a job. She made a few ineffectual efforts. She wondered if she could leave all this other life behind and start in over again—good.

Well, she would tell Farley that she was tired of being treated suspiciously, that—

But she couldn't get up the courage. She tried every day. Her life seemed so firmly established, her little round of duties so much a part of her that it seemed almost impossible to break away. She didn't know how to get away. She hated scenes. She knew that Farley would be angry and she didn't want to displease him. She still felt that he had been the one who had been kind, that he had done a lot for her.

Besides, it was hard to do anything definite. She loved Cargill, yet he had never told her he cared for her. Maybe he didn't care. But, even if he didn't, she wanted to get away. It seemed as if she couldn't stand deceiving him any longer. Yet, if she left, the thing she had done would make her just as bad. She couldn't really be good any more, no matter what she did. So she stayed. She wanted an easy solution.

On Friday Cargill strolled into the office. It was his lunch hour and Farley was at lunch, too. Mattie felt happy at the sight of him. How she wished that she could tell him everything, so that he would understand. If only he knew and still liked her. How she wished that there was nothing to tell—that things had just gone along, honestly, as they had when she first

came to New York. It didn't seem possible, even now, that it was she, little Mattie Grant, that had been living—like this. It seemed like a terrible nightmare and yet she knew it was real.

Cargill came up to her desk.

"Mattie," he said, "you know me pretty well, don't you?"

"Yes," said Mattie.

"Awfully well?"

"Well, rather well," Mattie smiled, so did Cargill. Then, abruptly as he had made the first engagement:

"Mattie, it's just this—will you marry me, tomorrow?"

Mattie was really surprised, surprised enough to have sincerely answered, "This is so sudden." She was a little stunned, too. Should she tell him now? Should she tell him and have it over with? Should she tell him, and lose him, rather? Or, well, perhaps she wouldn't tell him at all. She didn't answer.

"What's the matter, little girl? Have I been a little sudden? I haven't much diplomacy, you know." He smiled his slow, half sarcastic smile, but his lean face showed his eagerness.

"I don't know," said Mattie.

"But you care?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well it's all settled then. You'll leave here tomorrow. You don't have to give notice, do you? Just leave, and tomorrow we'll get married and then go flat hunting." Mattie's thoughts didn't seem to go in the right order. She was afraid to say anything. Cargill leaned over and took her hand.

"It's all right, little girl, really it is. I've been in love with you ever since the first day I came in here. Don't look so scared, nothing to look so scared about, getting married. We've neither one got any folks to consult. Don't be frightened. I'll call for you tomorrow at one. Can you go to lunch with me now?"

"No," said Mattie, "I can't, very well. You'd better go. We'll, we'll talk it over tomorrow."

"We'll do more than that," said Cargill.

After he had gone, Mattie sat at her typewriter, making up little dreams. Was she really going to marry—Cargill—tomorrow. There couldn't be anything more beautiful. She ought to tell him. It wasn't right, of course, not to. But, if she just pretended that the past hadn't happened, and tried to start in as if she were a good girl—a girl where she used to room had done something like that. The girl said nobody but a fool would tell a thing like that. She said in a city you weren't found out. And the girl had been a lot worse than Mattie. Only a few people knew and they didn't know Cargill and they were all men. Men didn't tell things like that, did they? What would Farley do? What would he say? He'd be square about things, of course.

She knew Farley didn't care for her, really. But she knew that he hated changes, new things. He was perfectly satisfied apparently, though lately he had made it clear that he was ashamed of her and she had let him see that she didn't care. It couldn't have gone on much longer, the way things were. But this—this seemed such a lovely way out of everything.

She wanted to tell Farley that night. But they went to the movies and he came home with a headache. She slept on the couch in the living-room. All night she tossed and thought of Cargill and Farley and—her life. She didn't have any money at all, but she didn't need it now. She knew that Cargill was not rich and she was glad of it. He had a good position. She was glad she had nice looking clothes, so that he wouldn't have to be ashamed of her.

Ashamed of her? Of course he would be if he knew. But—he wouldn't find out. If he didn't find out, how happy she would be, always. She went over all the little things Cargill had ever said to her, dear little sentences. How good she'd be to him. How careful about everything. She would try

so hard to be a good housekeeper, to help him and understand him. All of her life she would try to make up for what she had done. If only he wouldn't find out.

In the morning she prepared breakfast and cleaned up the house almost mechanically. Farley hurried out to see about buying some imported but-tons.

"I'll be in around eleven," he called as he left.

She packed her little round-cornered metal trunk and the imitation leather suit case again. She strapped and locked them and called the Janitor.

"If an express man calls for the trunk and suit case, here they are," she told him, and handed him a quarter. "I'm going away on a visit." Then she went to the office.

Feverishly, hardly knowing what she did, she typed some letters, finished up the work that had to be done. Then she put her desk in order. She was going to be married. Doubts and questions came to her, but there was little time left now. She would tell Farley as soon as he came in. He would be surprised. He wouldn't like it. But, he couldn't do anything, could he? She had always been square with him until now. Even now—didn't she have the right to get married. He didn't want to marry her. He was always talking about the time he'd marry—someone else. Couldn't she have her chance, too? She'd tell him when he came in.

IV

It was nearly twelve when Farley came to the office. Charley hurried out to lunch—he had to stay in during the afternoon to pay some of the men who sewed. Farley put his hat in his locker. He looked over some letters on his desk.

"Alf," called Mattie, "I've something to tell you."

"All right, in a minute. I see they

sent this bill from Kuhlman wrong again."

"This is important. Please come here a minute."

"All right, sure." Farley strolled over and smiled down on Mattie patronizingly. His head still hurt and Mattie had annoyed him lately, in little ways.

"What do you want, anyhow?"

"Alf, I'm, I'm going to get married."

"Married! Say, what do you mean?" He put back his head and laughed, rather ill-humoredly.

"Say, that's good, you're going to get married! Who is the *lucky*—man?"

"Yes, I'm going to be married—this afternoon. I wanted to tell you before, but I only knew it a few days ago. I'm, I'm very grateful to you for, for being kind to me, I—"

That is not what she had intended to say, at all. The words jumbled themselves together, instead of coming out the way she had planned them. Her tongue seemed thick.

"I'm going to get married today," she finished.

"You are, are you?"

"Yes, I'm sorry I didn't tell you before, but really I —"

"Who did you say the man was?"

"I, he—" again she hesitated. Farley looked crosser than she had thought he would. He didn't care, she knew that.

Farley, in fact, did not care for Mattie. But he was annoyed. He was annoyed at Mattie for, in some way, she seemed to be getting ahead of him. He had planned to get married some time and had even wondered how he would get rid of Mattie, if he would cast her off like they did in stories or if he would give her a check and get rid of her in that way. He rather favored the check. He looked forward to a scene, when he would tell her that all was over between them, showing her that he was being square when he handed her the check. Now it was Mattie who was giving him up, instead. Getting married, a girl like Mattie,

now! He was a man—that was entirely different, of course.

"Who did you say it was?" Not that he cared, some low fellow, of course, whom he didn't know. Still, he ought to know who it was that was getting—stung.

"It's, it's," again Mattie hesitated. Then, "It's Mr. Cargill, Lee Cargill," she said, holding onto the desk until her fingers hurt her, "the thin man that bought the grey suit."

"Not—one of my customers?"

"Yes, I—I met him here."

"So, that's how you've been carrying on here, have you? Behind my back—carrying on with my customers. That's how, is it? I was paying for your room and board," he seemed to have forgotten that Mattie had had no salary since the "arrangement" and that she had done the housework as well. "That's how you've been acting, a girl like you? You've told Cargill about yourself, have you?"

"I—I," began Mattie, again.

"Oh, yes you have. I know you. You're sly. And one of my customers. I'm a square guy, I am. I'll see that things are straightened out. I'll be on the level, I will. I won't let you put anything like this over one of my customers."

"You won't tell him?" Mattie nearly screamed it.

Her little future seemed crumbling. It had seemed—nearly safe, before.

"Alf, you couldn't do that. You won't tell him?"

"Of course I'll tell him. Ain't I been square with you? And you, you've been carrying on with one of my customers, under my nose—and now—say you're going to marry him. How do I know what else you've been doing?"

Mattie wanted to cry, but couldn't. Automatically, she put her pencils in her desk and patted her hair. Then she got up.

"Sit down," said Farley. "Where you going?"

She could not answer.

"You going to meet him? Where you going to meet him?"

Again she tried to say something. If—if she could get out and meet Cargill outside. Of course it wouldn't be fair to Cargill to marry him—yet, if she did marry him she would try so hard to make up for everything. She wasn't a good girl, but she wanted to start over again. He was the only man she had ever cared for. If she could only have this one chance.

"Sit down," said Farley. He grabbed her wrist. "Sit down, will you—"

Cargill had hurried through with his work at his office. Now, dressed in his new grey suit, jauntily carrying a light stick, he came into Farley's to get his promised wife. The sun was shining. He whistled a little tune as he came in.

"Lee," cried Mattie, as she saw him, "Lee, I've just told Alf, Mr. Farley—he, he—"

"She told me," said Farley, and he laughed, "she told me that she was going to marry you. I guess she forgot to tell you a few other things. I'm a square guy or I wouldn't tell you. But, well, you've been a customer of mine and I'm going to tell you how things are. Why this girl, this girl that's been saying she'll marry you—she—she's been living with me for a year now. She ain't told you that—has she?"

Cargill looked at Farley, then at Mattie. Mattie's eyes met his, but he didn't find what he was looking for.

"Lee," she said. "Lee, I didn't want—you to—know." Again, it wasn't what she had wanted to say.

"See," said Farley, "that's her. Crooked, I tell you. Crooked, with you and with me. And me, I've been square. I've been square with her. Ask her. Now, I'm being square with you. Listen, I tell you—"

But Cargill didn't listen. There was nothing he wanted to hear or say. Still carrying the light, jaunty little stick he went out. Mattie got up again. Mechanically, her hand went to her hair. She patted it in place. Mechanically, she reached for her hat and put it on

even adjusting it carefully in the little mirror over her desk.

Farley looked at her awkwardly. His anger seemed suddenly to leave him. He was ridiculously ill at ease.

"Say, Mattie," he said, "I was only trying to be fair. Understand? I'm a square guy. You can't put things over me. You see what that fellow thought of you, don't you? Say, if you want to treat me right, if you want to stay on—here, at the flat, I guess—"

"What?" asked Mattie, dully, as if she didn't understand.

"I said, I want to do the square

thing, if you want to keep on here like before—"

Then Mattie understood. She picked up a book—it was the first thing she could put her hand on—to throw at him. Then she looked at it and realized how inadequate it was—how inadequate she was. She laughed, it was not a pleasant laugh.

"You, you—" she could think of nothing to call him, nothing that would fit. She could think of nothing except a future that was no future at all.

"You—you—you square guy," she said, and went out into the sunshine.



I HAVE BEEN A GOD

By Jean Farquar

NOW I am respectable.
I deal in mortgages.
I am a director in the bank.

I am a vestryman at church.
I wear a frock coat.
But twice I have been a god!

Once,
Many years ago,
When my first love said she loved me.

And once,
When she was married,
And I got drunk.



MEN are wary. They fear each love may be their last. But women are often indiscreet because they are sure each love is their first.



IT takes us all our youth to prepare for the deeds of our old age, and then it takes us all our old age to repair the deeds of our youth.



A WOMAN begins to grow old when she begins to change dressmakers.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARLY

By Winthrop Parkhurst

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

MR. CHANDLER
MRS. CHANDLER

MURIEL RAPIER
A YOUNG MAN

TIME: *The present.*

PLACE: *New York City.*

THE scene is the living room of the Chandlers' apartment in East Sixty-first Street. At first blush the casual observer might easily imagine he had stumbled into a private house; for there is an air of inviting domesticity about the place which, hard to define, is nevertheless instantly felt and is not common to apartment houses.

The walls, for instance, instead of being finished in the conventionalized tints and meaningless designs customary in so otherwise sensible a neighborhood as East Sixty-fifth Street, are done with an almost European feeling for the value of tone, and are at once seen to be the work of an artist—not exactly the work of a Bakst, perhaps, but at any rate the work of some one who has heard of Bakst and believes in him. The furniture, too, is good; and the chairs and tables—there are two of them—just infrequent enough to emphasize their individual importance in the scheme of things. Candles are burning at both ends of a large well-proportioned mantel-piece; and a couple of maple logs cast a pleasant glow over the hearth and discreetly complete the work of the candle-light throughout the room. There is a comfortable divan on the left side of the fire-place and there are shelves of books on the right—altogether, in brief, a comfortable, home-like enough place, done in probably the best manner permitted in the conventional parts of New York City; that is, as artistic as strict modernity will allow and just short enough of absolute perfection to make everyone feel jolly comfortable.

If the casual observer should happen to get a closer glimpse of things than is permitted the audience, he might discover further evidences of taste and culture lying about him. For example, most of the books on the shelves are by such first-rate authors as Shakespeare, Spenser, and Shelley; while (though this fact may as easily indicate an elaborate pose as a true love of the beautiful) those on the table are by Sir Thomas Browne, Plato, and Aristophanes. Looking closer, one turns up a volume on the theatre by Gordon Craig, Oscar Wilde's "Salome," with the decorations by Aubrey Beardsley, and a quaintly incongruous companion piece by way of a first-edition of O. Henry. And close at hand is an iron incense-pot filled with Chinese incense. . . .

In short, then, this home into which we have stumbled is the home of some one who knows and cares for the beautiful; perhaps in a rather haphazard way, but still honestly. A couple of old pipes, and an ash-tray which looks as though it might have found its way from a premium

parlour, strike a bizarre note. So also does an unapologetic syphon of soda standing on a tray with two or three whiskey glasses. But such things cannot be said to mar: they only carry out their existence in a detached inoffensive sort of way; and if they hint strongly at the fact that the room was arranged by the sensitive hands of a woman and then slightly disarranged by the less sensitive hands of a man—probably the woman's husband—so much the better for the eloquence of the setting. For that is exactly what they are supposed to betray.

The curtain rises on the setting surprised out of almost any evening in the year. The candles are lighted and the wood-fire is already getting into good shape. The room is perfectly empty when the curtain rises, and remains so for a short time—perhaps thirty seconds. But presently the door at the right (leading into the hall, presumably) opens slowly and a young man—quite a young man, indeed, probably not more than twenty-two—comes in. He is very blond, fairly tall and has nice eyes, though perhaps too girlish lips, and he is dressed in evening clothes. He is a killer and knows it. In his right hand he carries a bunch of beautiful orchids and in his left his silk hat. He moves at once to the centre of the room, and he moves with the assurance of one who is treading familiar ground. Laying the flowers tenderly on the large table, he sits down. There is a short pause while he gazes into the wood-fire eloquently. Then, rather ostentatiously, he consults a beautiful gold watch that is attached to his left wrist—and sighs. Perhaps fifteen seconds elapse before he again consults his time-piece, whereupon he sighs more audibly than before. A third time, after another suitable pause, the young man turns up his wrist and regards the hands of his watch lengthily, dreamily; then he lets his hand fall again to his knee and sighs again.

This time, however, there is a certain sense of injury conveyed in his manner, and he looks at the crawling hands with affront. The new note in his manner is so subtly sounded that, like the titles of the books on the table, it will probably convey nothing to the average spectator sitting out across the foot-lights beyond a very natural ennui certain to be experienced by anyone waiting for anyone else. However, as will be shortly developed, the young man's ennui is of no ordinary variety. And this for two reasons: first, because the young man himself is no ordinary young man; and second, because the situation is no ordinary situation. At least let us sincerely hope that it is no ordinary situation, because, you see, the young man is engaged in the no less vulgar and immoral business than that of waiting for the appearance of another man's wife. To be sure, at this stage of the game the audience doesn't know he is waiting for somebody else's wife; but if it is an acute and intelligent audience it will probably have guessed as much long before it ever reached the theatre.

After sighing the third time the young man gets up from his place by the fire and crossing over to the centre-table picks up the flowers and sniffs them ecstatically. Then he lays them down. On the mantel-piece is the photograph of a very charming-looking woman. This the young man now reverently removes from its resting place and lowers to the level of his eyes. He regards the portrait lengthily, dreamily, moodily, and holds it at various distances from his person. Finally, overcome by some tremendous emotion which he can control no longer, he brings the photograph quickly to his lips and kisses it passionately. It is none of your pecking little platonic kisses, this kiss which the young man implants on the surface of the photograph: it is a full-blown, long-

drawn-out, soul-delirium affair. Indeed, it is so long-drawn-out and so soulful that the young man fails to hear approaching footsteps in the outer hall; and the door is already half opened before he realizes that he is not alone. But even then he does not fully grasp the situation. For he is so full of his emotion and he is so far from the world of mundane things that he never even stops to consider that mundane things exist. He is not alarmed. On the contrary he is overjoyed. Hearing footsteps, he immediately jumps to the dangerous conclusion that they must be her footsteps. So, still holding the picture fast in his hand, while a look of rapture transfigures his face, the young man turns quickly toward the opening door.

THE YOUNG MAN

Marion!

MR. CHANDLER

(He is a perfectly ordinary man and needs no description.) Eh? What's that?

THE YOUNG MAN

(Dashed to the ground, but calm.)
Oh—oh, I beg your pardon.

MR. CHANDLER

Not at all. *(After a slight pause.)*
Waiting for somebody?

THE YOUNG MAN

Yes, Mrs. Chandler. The maid said she would be down directly.

MR. CHANDLER

Oh, yes, yes; quite so, quite so. Take a seat, won't you?

THE YOUNG MAN

Thank you. *(He sits down; so does Mr. Chandler.)*

MR. CHANDLER

(After a moment, conversationally.)
Nice weather we're having, isn't it?

THE YOUNG MAN

I—I beg your pardon?

MR. CHANDLER

I said, we're having very nice weather lately.

THE YOUNG MAN

Oh, yes. *(Pause.)* To tell the truth, I really haven't noticed.

MR. CHANDLER

No? Been too busy, I suppose—making love.

THE YOUNG MAN

I—I beg your pardon?

MR. CHANDLER

I said, I suppose you've been too busy making love to bother about the sort of weather we're having.

THE YOUNG MAN

Oh, yes, yes. . . . Er—what do you mean?

MR. CHANDLER

(With a generous wave of the hand.)
Oh, not that I blame you a particle, understand. I was young once myself.

THE YOUNG MAN

I am afraid I really don't follow you.

MR. CHANDLER

(Leading him on.) And Mrs. Chandler is undoubtedly a very fascinating woman. *(Tauntingly.)* At least dozens of young men seem to find her so . . .

THE YOUNG MAN

(Roused at last.) No! Who are they? It is false, I tell you! False!

MR. CHANDLER

(Good naturedly.) Come, don't be jealous. You really have no cause to be jealous.

THE YOUNG MAN

(Beside himself now.) No cause, you say? No cause! You tell me practically that she allows every young whipper-snapper to lie at her feet, lick her hand, make love to her. And then you tell me I have no cause to be jealous. *(Laughs melodramatically.)* No

cause! Ha! To-morrow I will shoot myself.

MR. CHANDLER

Don't. Make it the day after.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Grandiosely.*) You wish to joke. Very well. We shall see.

MR. CHANDLER

(*With honest curiosity.*) You really are very much in love with my wife, then, aren't you?

THE YOUNG MAN

I—what—? (*He falters perceptibly.*) Who—are—you?

MR. CHANDLER

(*Always willing to oblige.*) Well, my name happens to be Mr. Chandler. Yet, as Shakespeare says, what's in a name? After all, why should I begrudge another the pleasure of a very inexpensive illusion. You evidently idolize my wife just as hundreds of other whipper-snappers, as you so aptly called them a minute ago, idolize her. You came here this evening, I presume, to gaze into the depths of her beautiful blue eyes, to touch her hand fondly, perhaps even to ki—

THE YOUNG MAN

Stop! It's a lie! We are only friends. (*He lays the picture down.*)

MR. CHANDLER

Oh!

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Dithyrambically.*) Yes, friends—friends.

MR. CHANDLER

I see—friends. (*He looks at the picture significantly.*)

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Calmer now, but still very intense.*) I did not know you were Marion's husband when you came into the room; I confess it. I thought you were one of the family—

MR. CHANDLER

Well, isn't a husband any longer even one of the family—?

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Ignoring the interruption.*) But I am glad this meeting has occurred. Yes, glad, glad—oh, more than I can tell you.

MR. CHANDLER

I don't know why you should be so glad about it. I never heard of a man in your position being glad to meet the woman's husband.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Majestically.*) Listen, and I will tell you. I am an honourable man: that is the reason.

MR. CHANDLER

(*Slightly amused.*) Oh, that's the reason, is it? Well, go on.

THE YOUNG MAN

Yes, I am an honourable man. I would not steal the affections of any man's wife without telling him about it beforehand.

MR. CHANDLER

I see. That really is thoughtful of you, you know; it really is. Though I should think in most cases you wouldn't have much chance of stealing the affections of a man's wife *after* you had told him about it. Then you intend to steal the affections of my wife. Is that the idea?

THE YOUNG MAN

Since you put it so crudely, yes.

MR. CHANDLER

It was you, I believe, who first put it so crudely. However, don't let's wrangle over a small matter. How, if you will pardon my curiosity, do you intend to go ahead with the job?

THE YOUNG MAN

The job?

MR. CHANDLER

I mean the stealing the affections business.

THE YOUNG MAN

Oh, well, I scarcely think there will be very much difficulty there.

MR. CHANDLER

You scarcely think so, eh? You've

had some experience, then, I imagine. Marion perhaps has given you some small hint that—well, to put it mildly, that your attentions are not altogether disagreeable to her.

THE YOUNG MAN

Perhaps, if you wish to put it that way—yes.

MR. CHANDLER

(*In the best of humour.*) As I thought, as I thought. And when I come to think it all over, you know, I am really not in the least surprised.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Getting on splendidly.*) You flatter me, Mr. Chandler. You flatter me, indeed.

MR. CHANDLER

(*Taking him down abruptly.*) No, I don't: you flatter yourself.

THE YOUNG MAN

I? What do you mean?

MR. CHANDLER

(*Suddenly getting down to business.*) Here. Let's see: what's your name. Barrington, isn't it?

THE YOUNG MAN

No. It's Merri—

MR. CHANDLER

Of course, Merriwell. How could I have forgotten it? Well, Mr. Merriwell, I congratulate—

THE YOUNG MAN

Pardon me. It's not Merriwell It's—

MR. CHANDLER

How's that? Come. Don't tell me you're not the man whose pocket-handkerchief was found on our fire-escape last week. Why, I'm sure the name was Merriwell.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Beginning to lose his temper.*) Whatever my shortcomings may be, Mr. Chandler, I can assure you I am neither a fireman nor a burglar. I don't in the least understand what it is that you are trying to prove, but I beg of you at least not to be insulting.

MR. CHANDLER

I am not insulting. You say you are neither a fireman nor a burglar. Well, neither was this fellow Merriwell. Simply stayed so late one night he didn't actually dare to go out by the front door. 'Fraid of starting a scandal. You know these apartment-houses—how everybody talks. Course I wasn't here at the time. If I had been the thing wouldn't have happened—you bet. Ha, ha, ha! But I found out about it afterwards from the servants. One of them had found the fellow's handkerchief on the fire-escape. Pretty good joke—what? Ha, ha!

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Pained, affronted, scandalized.*) And you can joke about it now?

MR. CHANDLER

Well, what would you have me do? Cry?

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Brushing aside every explanation.*) You can joke about the most sacred relations in the world! You, Marion's husband, can sit there calmly in your chair and tell me all this as though it were the most commonplace thing that had ever happened! My God! You are a beast!

MR. CHANDLER

Here, don't you call names: it's very bad form. And remember you're in my house. You think it's shocking, do you? Well, everything's shocking, I guess, till you get good and used to it. I've got good and used to it, that's all. Of course, at the beginning I was furious. I was just like every other man under the sun who finds out for the first time in his life that his wife doesn't think him just the cutest, darlingest little thing that ever was. But I got over that stage, I can tell you. I kicked a young fop downstairs once when I was first married just because I happened to find him bringing my wife a bunch of orchids on her birthday. And came near breaking his neck, too, by the way. But then, by degrees,

as others came along and I found out about them—

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Trembling with emotion.*) There have been others then, Mr. Chandler? Tell me—tell me quite frankly. I—I can stand it.

MR. CHANDLER

(*With the utmost flippancy.*) Oh, Lord, yes. Dozens of 'em.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*His hands at his ears.*) No, no, no. It is not true. I will not believe it.

MR. CHANDLER

Fact, I assure you, Mr.—oh, by the way, you know you never told me your name.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*In desperation.*) No, no, no! It is not true. It cannot be true. Never will I believe it. Never!

MR. CHANDLER

(*Indifferently.*) Suit yourself. It's true just the same—as true as I'm standing here squirting soda into a glass. (*He has moved over to the small table and poured himself a generous drink. Now he picks up the whiskey bottle and holds it invitingly in the air.*) Here, have some, Mr.—say, what is your name, anyhow?

THE YOUNG MAN

(*By this time on the verge of tears.*) Oh—oh, call me a-a-anything you want. Call me a s-sentimental fool; call me a silly jackass; call me a— (*He breaks into a sudden flood of weeping.*)

MR. CHANDLER

(*Reflectively.*) Hm. I almost think I will. But come; be a man; brace up; have some of this; it'll do you good.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Making strange noises in his throat.*) N-no. I—I can't drink.

MR. CHANDLER

That's only because you're not married. Get married, my boy, and you'll be able to, fast enough, I warrant you.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Pettishly.*) Why do you say that? And anyway, how do you know I'm not married?

MR. CHANDLER

(*Explanatorily.*) Well, you see, if you were married you'd be drinking like a fish now instead of blubbering like a baby.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*His curiosity rapidly drying his tears.*) What do you mean? Does being married always make you a drunkard?

MR. CHANDLER

(*Succinctly.*) No. But it always makes you want to be one!

THE YOUNG MAN

(*After gulping several times sympathetically.*) Then—then you are unhappy, too, Mr. Chandler?

MR. CHANDLER

(*With great solemnity.*) Oh, unspeakably!

THE YOUNG MAN

Oh—oh, I am so sorry.

MR. CHANDLER

Thank you—thank you, my boy. (*He walks over to the young man and grasps his hand fervently.*)

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Penitently.*) And I never even suspected. I thought just now—a minute ago, you know, you didn't seem unhappy at all.

MR. CHANDLER

No? Didn't I?

THE YOUNG MAN

No.

MR. CHANDLER

Well, I was just the same.

THE YOUNG MAN

You were, really?

MR. CHANDLER

(*The sorrows of the world in his voice.*) Yes. Just the same.

THE YOUNG MAN

Then we are both unhappy together, aren't we?

MR. CHANDLER

Alas! I suppose we are.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Absolutely overcome.*) Oh, isn't it perfectly terrible! (*He relapses into a state of semi-coma; but suddenly he rises triumphantly with an air of inspiration.*) I tell you what. We are both miserable, together. Well, we'll both get out of our misery together, too.

MR. CHANDLER

Eh?

THE YOUNG MAN

(*With magnificent finality.*) Yes, that is what we will do: we will commit suicide to-night, you and I.

MR. CHANDLER

(*Alarmed.*) Suicide? What's that for?

THE YOUNG MAN

Why, don't you understand? We are going to leave all our unhappiness behind us forever, to-night—you and I.

MR. CHANDLER

True. Of course. I remember. But—well, wouldn't that be just a little dangerous—(*Hastily correcting himself*)—I mean, isn't there really any other way?

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Sententiously.*) None.

MR. CHANDLER

(*After considering the matter fully.*) No; you are right; there is none.

THE YOUNG MAN

And we must die.

MR. CHANDLER

(*Echoing his mood perhaps a little too perfectly.*) Die! To-night! Together!

THE YOUNG MAN

You and I!

MR. CHANDLER

And leave all our unhappiness behind us forever!

THE YOUNG MAN

Forever! (*Quite thrilled about it.*) Oh, it will be beautiful!

MR. CHANDLER

Beautiful! (*He gazes raptly up at the ceiling and rolls his eyes prodigiously.*)

THE YOUNG MAN

(*After a slight pause.*) And to think that when I came here this evening I was happy—happy. (*Impulsively.*) Oh, Mr. Chandler, you don't know what you have done for me—you never can know. Ten minutes ago I was a blinded young fool gazing insanely up at the stars, imagining that they were mine to reach out to and touch and seize in my hands. Now you have opened my eyes and I see things as they really are. I see the world as the sordid, unhappy place that it is. I see women as the misguided creatures of degraded impulse, Circes, all of them, with their nets spread craftily for the trusting feet of men. Ah! I trusted them once, but I will never trust them again. For they are false—false! Every one of them, I tell you, is false. Bah! I am done with them. I am done with the world.

MR. CHANDLER

(*Irrelevantly.*) Have a drink.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Ignoring the impudence.*) I came here to-night, Mr. Chandler, to tell your wife that I loved her. I must be frank with you now: I can't be otherwise. I thought you were going to be away from home and I intended to avail myself of your absence—

MR. CHANDLER

Oh!

THE YOUNG MAN

But fate took a hand in the game, and I can't say that I am sorry. Better to be disillusioned now—ah, far better to be disillusioned now than—than la-

ter. *(He chokes slightly as he utters the last words, and a few tears trickle from between his fingers, which he has pressed to his face. Then, since there is nothing more for him to say and the end of the world has come, he rises from his chair, picks up the orchids and advances slowly toward the door.)*

MR. CHANDLER

(In genuine surprise.) Oh! Going?

THE YOUNG MAN

(In a faint whisper.) Yes.

MR. CHANDLER

Why—why, I thought you wanted to see Marion. I guess she'll be down in a minute. Why don't you wait?

THE YOUNG MAN

(Aghast.) See your wife? After what you have told me?

MR. CHANDLER

(Half apologetically.) Well, at least some sort of farewell, you know—

THE YOUNG MAN

(Tragically.) Never! Never will I look into her false eyes again. *(He drops his hands limply at his side.)* It is all over. *(With sudden mystery, he steps closer to Mr. Chandler.)* Besides—our compact, you know. We must both be going.

MR. CHANDLER

Going? Where?

THE YOUNG MAN

(By the waters of Babylon.) To the land where Circes do not lay their snares under the pale moonlight of desire.

MR. CHANDLER

(Impatiently.) That's poetry, so of course it doesn't mean anything. Talk sense.

THE YOUNG MAN

(Mr. Chandler's matter-of-fact attitude clearly pains him tremendously. He makes a hasty movement with his hands as if to ward off a sudden glare of light in his eyes. And for a moment he cannot bring himself to reply. But then, realizing that the only thing

left for him to do is to meet vulgarity with more vulgarity, he steps close to the man's side and hisses into his ear the one word)—SUICIDE!!!

MR. CHANDLER

Oh! *(He starts back a step from mere physical shock. For a few seconds he cannot apparently grasp what he has heard. But the young man's attitude is really unmistakable; without a doubt in the world he is absolutely sincere. As this grotesque fact works its way into Mr. Chandler's brain a smile of amused, half-indulgent contempt spreads slowly over his face. The situation is simply so delicious that he has to roll it over and over again on his tongue to taste it to the full.)* Say! *(He stops short again, overpowered anew by the colossal absurdity of it all.)* You didn't think I was serious about that, did you? *(He suddenly bursts into a terrific and prolonged guffaw.)* Lord!

THE YOUNG MAN

(He is too tremendously in earnest to feel hurt at the outbreak; all he experiences is saddened surprise and a certain lofty contempt for the betrayal of such shallowness and coarseness of spirit. He waits quietly until the gale has completely passed. Then he addresses Mr. Chandler slowly and with almost preternatural calm.) I thought you were unhappy, Mr. Chandler: I see now that I was mistaken. It would be impossible for you to be unhappy: it is not in your nature to be. Like almost all other men of this world you are narrow, vain, selfish and incapable of experiencing one genuine human emotion. When you first confessed to me your wife's infidelity—and joked about it!—I was horrified. Later—for a few moments—I believed that your apparent unconcern was an elaborate blind—that hidden beneath your flippant manner was a heart, torn and bleeding. Believe me, Mr. Chandler, I know what it is to suffer; and I could sympathize with your suffering deeply. I guessed—or thought I guessed—all you had gone through—

the sleepless nights, the red dawns of despair when all the mockery of the world points its brazen finger at you and bids you live another day. Now I know better. Perhaps these words may sound strange in your ears after having told you that I loved your wife. But mine was a pure love. I worshipped Marion: that was all—

MR. CHANDLER

That's what they all say.

THE YOUNG MAN

I know. And I do not pretend to be different from the world in such matters. I admit that perhaps my intentions, judged by the standards of the world, were not altogether honourable. But Marion seemed unhappy and—

MR. CHANDLER

(*Quickly.*) Did she tell you she was?

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Sorrowing for such lack of imagination.*) No. There are some things a woman does not need to tell the man who loves her. I knew. I saw. I guessed more even than she could ever have told me—

MR. CHANDLER

I shouldn't wonder, at all.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*With simple finality.*) And now I am going—

MR. CHANDLER

(*Coarsely.*) That surcease stunt, I suppose.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Very quietly.*) I am going to commit suicide. (*Pause.*) You have robbed me of everything that makes life worth living. (*Pause.*) Good-bye. (*He takes another step toward the door; then turns, apopemptically.*) I do not need to say anything more, Mr. Chandler. I think you understand without my telling you. All I want you to know is that I have lived the very bitterest hour of my life this evening. I would not have believed before that human beings could sink so low. Now

I know that they can. That is all. Good-bye. (*He takes another step toward the door and really seems on the point of vanishing through it, when Mr. Chandler arrests him with a word.*)

MR. CHANDLER

Wait! I have something to say to you. (*The young man stands quiescent.*) You're not very complimentary, on my word. But if you're really set on killing yourself I suppose I'll have to forgive you that last remark of yours. Now, I'm a more dramatic person than perhaps you'd think I was, to look at me. I want to ask you a favor. Will you let me see you shoot yourself? I'd really be interested to, you know.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Bitterly.*) I knew your soul was absolutely calloused. I knew it. (*Supinely.*) Yet—if you wish—well, why not?

MR. CHANDLER

(*Bustling around with sudden good humour.*) Good! Well, now, just wait a minute while I get you a pistol. You might as well do it here, you know. You don't mind, do you?

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Impassive.*) No. (*He stands irresolutely in the middle of the room after Mr. Chandler has left. Then his eyes, wandering over the place, light on Mrs. Chandler's photograph lying on the table—and cling there. Almost as though in a dream he reaches out for it, takes it tenderly in his hand after putting down the orchids, and gazes at the portrait longingly, lovingly. Then, as in the opening scene, with a sudden delirious intoxication of soul, he crushes the picture frantically to his lips and kisses it. But this time he has scarcely done so before he flings the portrait, with a little scream of rage and disgust, onto the floor.*) Bah!

MR. CHANDLER

(*Who has returned almost immediately after.*) Here. (*He gives a revolver to the young man, who takes it in his hand spinelessly.*)

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Looking into the barrel.*) You are sure it is properly loaded?

MR. CHANDLER

Trust me for that.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*With quiet scorn.*) Yes, I think I could. (*He fingers the trigger almost lovingly.*)

MR. CHANDLER

(*In a state of bubbling glee, and trying to convince himself that the whole thing is after all perhaps not an elaborate hoax.*) And you're really going to kill yourself! I can't believe it. (*With genuine admiration.*) By Jove! None of the others would do it, you know.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Shrinking.*) Don't!

MR. CHANDLER

No; that *wasn't* nice of me, was it? (*Putting his hand affectionately on the young man's shoulder.*) Well, good-bye, my boy—good-bye. (*The young man raises the muzzle of the revolver and places it carefully over the region of his heart. Mr. Chandler, quite thrilled, stands off a little way with his head cocked on one side to admire the effect. Suddenly, as though he were nothing more than the director in a casual tragedy for the moving pictures, he holds up his hand authoritatively.*) Stop. Wait. Got an idea. I think I'll call Marion. This is really too good to miss.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Shrinking again at such monstrous cold-bloodedness.*) O-oh!

MR. CHANDLER

(*Without waiting for a reply to his suggestion he trots off excitedly to the outer door and, opening it, calls imperatively.*) Marion! Come, quick! Somebody's dying! Hurry up! (*He waits at the door with one eye on the young man until a rapid swish of skirts is audible outside and Mrs. Chandler comes running in.*)

MRS. CHANDLER

(*She is wild-eyed and intensely excited. She glances at the young man, then at her husband, then at the young man, then at her husband. But she sees nothing, hears nothing. All she is aware of is that some dreadful tragedy is about to be enacted. She is tremendously frightened and realizes that real drama is under her very nose; and, being a woman, of course enjoys it.*) O-o-oh. Wh-wh-what—?

THE YOUNG MAN

(*There is a sudden hush. The young man can only gaze with infinite sorrow on the face of his beloved.*) Farewell. I know all. I am going to kill myself.

MRS. CHANDLER

(*Realizing by this time that something frightful is going to happen, she advances tottering toward the young man with outstretched, imploring arms.*) Marmaduke! What do you mean? What are you doing? Stop!

MR. CHANDLER

(*Unobserved by the young man, he now puts his finger quickly to his lips, and, frowning warningly, makes an unmistakable hiss.*) Fff!

MRS. CHANDLER

(*She, of course, cannot understand the strange signal which her husband has passed her; and she does not attempt to understand it. There is no time. The young man's face has become transfigured. He is on the point of hurling himself into eternity when the woman whom he loves and scorns rushes forward to stay his errant hand. It is too late. A sharp report rings out in the room. Fainting with fright, but still conscious, she falls back, horrified at the sound, and utters a little scream of terror.*) A-a-a-AH!

(*For about three seconds after this there is a solemn hush throughout the room. The young man sways perilously on his legs for a short minute, and seems about to lose his balance and fall to the floor. But*

he doesn't lose his balance, and he doesn't fall to the floor; and the fact that he does neither of these things surprises him almost as much as it does Mrs. Chandler. He finds himself standing securely on both feet in an upright position. More mysteriously, he finds himself alive. It is astounding. For one brief remarkable second he is too dazed and shocked to comprehend this extraordinary phenomenon. But curiosity gets the better of him. His left hand strays up weakly to the spot over his heart; then, still inquiring, over the whole of his chest. But it discovers nothing. And not till Mr. Chandler, who has been watching the performance with diabolical glee, explodes with laughter like an overcharged seltzer bottle does either Mrs. Chandler or the young man even dimly comprehend what has happened.)

MR. CHANDLER

Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! *A blank cartridge. Ha, ha, ha! (He nearly dies of mirth.)*

MRS. CHANDLER

(The young man is too stunned to say anything at all. But the woman he once loved and now scorns comes rushing forward with a perfect flood of questions which she manages somehow to get in between the cyclonic puffs of her husband's hysteria.) Billy! Marmaduke! What in the world is the matter? What are you two doing? What does all this mean? Stop. Listen! *(She shakes Mr. Chandler by the shoulder. But he has gone off into another gale, so she turns in despair and, a little awed by the still-smoking revolver, faces the young man. He, however, slinks back from her in open aversion.)*

THE YOUNG MAN

(Sharply.) No! Don't touch me!

MRS. CHANDLER

(Nonplussed.) What do you mean? What is the matter with you two? Are you both crazy?

THE YOUNG MAN

(Proudly defiant.) I know all—ALL. *(He retreats to a corner of the room.)*

MRS. CHANDLER

(Appealing again to her husband.) Billy! Speak to me. *(He is getting blue around the lips.)* Tell me what's happened. Tell me!

MR. CHANDLER

(Sobering for an instant, he points with a shaking finger at the young man.) Nothing's—happened—Marion. That's the joke. He—he tried—to—commit—*(The memory of the thing is too much for him; he breaks down again.)* Ha, ha, ha—suicide! But he couldn't—ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

MRS. CHANDLER

(She surveys the storm, helpless, and throws up her hands with a gesture of despair. Then, determined to end the mystery at all costs, she approaches the young man grimly again.) Marmaduke! What are you doing with that pistol?

THE YOUNG MAN

(Backing away.) It is all over. I know everything.

MRS. CHANDLER

Don't be silly. Give me that.

THE YOUNG MAN

(He hands her the weapon and starts for the door. Mr. Chandler, by this time, has sobered somewhat and is following the proceedings with intense relish.) Farewell! *(He is trying to make a graceful exit and to do so commences to back away.)* Farewell! *(He is so dramatic about it that he never thinks of looking where he is going, and bumps undignifiedly into a woman who appeared quietly in the doorway during the height of the excitement and has been standing there unobserved ever since.)*

MRS. CHANDLER

(At the instant of collision.) Oh! Mrs. Rapier.

THE YOUNG MAN

I—I beg your—*(With sudden recognition and joy.)* Muriel!

MRS. RAPIER

(*To Mrs. Chandler.*) What has happened? Marmaduke! What are you doing?

MR. CHANDLER

(*Ready with his sally.*) Nothing's happened, Mrs. Rapier. That's the joke. (*Pointing his finger at the young man as before.*) He tried to—to commit—ha, ha, ha—suicide. Ha, ha, ha!

MRS. RAPIER

Suicide!

MR. CHANDLER

But he couldn't. Ha, ha, ha! He, he, he! Ho, ho, ho!

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Unable to bear the strain any longer, he appeals wildly to Mrs. Rapier.*) Ah, Muriel. Take me away from all this. Take me away. I can't stand it any longer. Please!

MR. CHANDLER

(*Warningly.*) Look out for the surcease, old top. Ha, ha!

THE YOUNG MAN

(*Almost in tears.*) Ah, please. They don't understand. They are coarse, vulgar. But you understand, don't you? Ah, take me away with you, Muriel. Take me away.

MRS. RAPIER

(*Suddenly seizing his hand, which she kisses in mad adoration.*) Come, Marmaduke, dear. Come with me.

THE YOUNG MAN

(*With a cry of joy as they fly out the door together.*) Ah!

MRS. CHANDLER

(*Rooted in amazement.*) Well, what do you suppose that means?

MR. CHANDLER

Some more of that pale moonlight dope, I guess.

MRS. CHANDLER

Pale moonlight?

MR. CHANDLER

(*Volunteering no further explana-*

tion.) Yes. Well, shall we have some more solitaire to-night?

MRS. CHANDLER

No; I feel rather tired. (*She is about to leave.*) Billy, whatever in the world do you suppose was the matter with Marmaduke Merryweathers?

MR. CHANDLER

Oh, that's his name, is it? I might have known it. I don't know.

MRS. CHANDLER

I never saw him like that before.

MR. CHANDLER

And I guess you'll never see him again, either.

MRS. CHANDLER

Why?

MR. CHANDLER

Well, he's pretty gone over Mrs. Rapier. I advised him to marry her.

MRS. CHANDLER

Oh! (*After a slight pause.*) Of course he is rather tiresome. Still, he's a dear, you know.

MR. CHANDLER

Yes, I know. That's the reason I advised him to marry her.

(*Mrs. Chandler lifts her eyebrows at this enigmatic statement and shrugs her shoulders indifferently. She seems on the point of saying something, but then she decides not to—and leaves. Mr. Chandler picks up the revolver which has been left on the table and examines it thoughtfully. Then, extracting the largest orchid in the bunch, he places it carefully in his button-hole. Finally he pours himself a drink. But at just the instant that his lips are about to touch the glass he is unaccountably seized with one of his old paroxysms. He sets the glass hastily back on the tray and bursts into a terrific roar.*)

MR. CHANDLER

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

(*The curtain falls.*)

THE OLD MARQUIS

By Wyndham Martyn

THE villagers early at work on their farms and the shepherds on the moors often saw the old Marquis on his great horse riding toward the distant hills from whose summit he could see those placid acres that had been his family's for eight hundred years.

He was a very old man now, and a lonely one. Since his lady's death twenty years before he had left his country estate but rarely. London, where his mansion in Bruton street was left to caretakers, had not seen him since the Coronation, when he had attended the Abbey in the robes of his rank.

On his early rides he took his way past farms whose owners had in past times ridden behind his ancestors as bowmen at Crécy and Agincourt, men-at-arms in later campaigns, and troopers with Marlborough and Wellington. And as he passed them with a kindly smile, he was overwhelmed with a dumb, unuttered sorrow that while they had stout children to come after them and till the sweet brown earth, he, their lord, was the last of his race. And he grieved to know that before long there must come a morning when he would no longer be able to climb into the saddle.

Of late his thoughts had been running on the changing times, the growing power of the people, the discontent of the democracy and those earth tremors which might mean revolution. And it saddened him, who loved his people, to see the passing of the old standards and the introduction of those which to his rigid mind meant but the overthrow of order and the rule of malcontent

mobs. And often, when he read of this widespread unrest, he wondered whether it were not better that he should be the last of his line than leave heirs to watch social upheaval and the subversion of all his class held just and right. But he was too old to examine into the roots of modernist movements and social democracy, although they frightened him vaguely and left him with a greater sense of loneliness.

One summer morning when he had taken his accustomed moorland ride and there was still half an hour before breakfast would be served, he made his way to the long gallery about which were ranged portraits of his ancestors. And though many had been distinguished men in their time most would have left no great name but for the genius who had painted them. Holbein had painted one of them, Van Dyck had immortalized a group of children at their mother's side; and that great Marquis who had been ambassador to Spain would go down to history while men loved art as the subject of one of Velasquez's finest pictures.

But the old Marquis passed all these by and came presently to the end of the gallery where his own portrait hung and that of his dead marchioness. And before her picture he paused a long while. But he paused longest before a blank space on the tapestried wall, where once a portrait had been hung, but was now only a bare expanse. And had one been closely watching the old man, one would have declared that he gazed at that faded tapestry seeing some picture visible to none else.

After a time he went to the cheerful breakfast room and examined the let-

ters lying by his plate. They were private communications which his secretary did not open. One large square envelope attracted his attention. The coat of arms on it and the angular writing told him it was from an old friend, a man famous in the councils of the Empire and once a notable ambassador. They had not seen one another since the Coronation had brought them to London.

"My dear Friend," the letter ran, "I have a singular favor to ask of you; and as we are both of us nearly at the journey's end, it is in all likelihood the last you will have the power to grant. There will come to you this afternoon one who is a stranger. I ask you to treat him with all courtesy and to remember, no matter what he asks, there is in his heart no less than in mine the desire to serve you. I do not know what he wants with you. He has only confided in me that it is wholly of an intimate nature and I respect him sufficiently to know that what he says he means. I have assured him that you will not seek to penetrate his incognito. For the rest I may state that he is to be received as at least your equal in birth."

From the terrace that ran along the south side of his great house the Marquis beheld during the late afternoon an approaching automobile and guessed that the stranger of whom Lord Iffley had written was at hand.

It was a big man, almost of his own stature, whom a servant conducted toward him, a man with a closely cropped beard and flashing brown eyes. And although the Marquis looked at the world through dimmed eyes of blue, there was a certain marked resemblance between them as they faced one another standing erect as men who have been soldiers.

The Marquis looked at the car which was still waiting. "I had hoped," he said, "to have had you as my guest to-night."

The stranger spoke with a faint accent the old aristocrat could not place.

"My Lord," he returned, "my time is not my own to dispose of, and I cannot absent myself from London to-night. I availed myself of the Earl of

Iffley's introduction because I am anxious to see your portrait gallery, to which so many of the great masters have contributed."

The Marquis was conscious of a certain impatience at the mysterious manner in which Lord Iffley had written. Here was a man who had come, as had so many, merely to see those paintings that would at his death become the property of the nation.

"I wish I were a more competent guide," he said bowing. "My late wife knew all the pictures thoroughly, but I have not her gifts."

The stranger followed him to the long gallery. His guide stooped before the great canvas that had been glorified by the Spanish master.

"This is my favorite of all," the Marquis said smiling. "And I almost fear to confess to one who is probably a judge of art that I love Velasquez mostly for his horses."

It was odd, the Marquis thought, that the stranger betrayed little interest and passed on by the Romneys, Knellers and Lawrences to the more modern pictures and came to a pause before that blank space whereon no portrait hung.

He looked at the Marquis steadily. "My Lord," he questioned slowly, "what used to hang there?"

The old man drew himself to his full height and there was an air of hauteur about him when he answered.

"Sir," he returned, "there have been those who asked me that question idly, but none who ask as you do with some hidden reason. None has ventured to demand that."

"Nevertheless," the stranger insisted, "I must ask you again by what chance is there no portrait here?"

"Would you open an old wound?" the Marquis cried.

"It is one that has never healed," the stranger said and looked at him compassionately. "My Lord," he added, when the old man had said nothing but was still gazing at the empty space, "I desire you to believe that I have only your welfare at heart when I tell you

I have come many miles for your answer."

The Marquis passed his trembling hand across his brow. Why was this stranger come, and what did his old friend mean by sending him? He was conscious, too, of a certain air of command about this stranger. Iffley must have been very certain that his mission was a friendly one ere he wrote. Suddenly he turned to the younger man, his resolve taken.

"The picture that hung there," he said slowly, "was removed by my orders nearly fifty years ago."

"Whose portrait was it?" the stranger demanded.

"It was my only son."

"And you, his father, the last of your race, removed it?"

The Marquis bowed assent, "I did."

"Did you remove it to some room where you could have it near you more intimately?"

The Marquis frowned. "I have not seen it for fifty years. I shall never look on it again."

"My Lord," the stranger returned, "if those who are younger and know less of the world than you should seek to pattern themselves on one of your station and distinction, would you have them harden their hearts toward only sons as you have done?"

The Marquis made a gesture of impatience. "How can you understand?"

"Only by your telling me," the other admitted. "Only by your trusting me."

"I have a mind to do so," the old man said. "It may be that I am come to the babbling stages of my second childhood; it may be that after these years of silence there is some relief in it. You ask to know why my son's portrait does not hang where it would seem to have a prescriptive right. It is because I cannot have there one, even if he is my only son, who has fallen from the traditions of his family and been false to the honor of his house."

"One would think a father had been less harsh a judge," the stranger replied.

"I was not harsh," the old man cried.

"As God is my judge I was only just. Lord Iffley tells me you, too, are of ancient stock, so you can comprehend something of one's jealousy of family tradition. Mine is a family that has served its sovereign for near a thousand years. It may be we have fought for worthless causes, but I think we have never sold our conscience or our sword. These men," he indicated the framed occupants of the gallery, "have not all lived lives that were wholly worthy. Some have died in battle, others in brawls, but never one but has met his death bravely." The old man bent his neck and bowed his white head. "And my son killed himself to avoid the consequence of a crime. He had no place among better men."

The stranger gazed at him with pity in his eyes.

"And have the years," he said gently, "no power to make you less hard? You have lived far beyond the common span and there comes the day when one makes up his accounts for the last reckoning."

"It was fifty years ago," the old nobleman answered, "and never a day when I have not tried to convince myself that I made too stern a decision. And now, when you remind me I have shortly to render an account of my stewardship, I can only tell myself that I have been no less than just."

"My Lord," said the other, "if it were not that I have a commission to fulfill and have sworn an oath not to fall short of my duty, I would not dare to ask you more. Lord Iffley, who has known me from childhood, and been your friend since his own, has said that I desire to serve you. My Lord, I ask you to tell me what unhappy circumstances led to the death of him whose portrait once hung next his mother's in your gallery."

The Marquis looked at him keenly.

"I can trust my old friend," he replied, "and through him I will trust you. It is not a pleasant history and by your leave I will mention no names in its recital. My son, when he was twenty-five, was accredited to the em-

bassy of his country in the capital of a kingdom in central Europe. It was a training, I felt, that would fit him more than any other to adorn the position he would later be called upon to fill. His success seemed assured until that day when it was said he cast his eyes above him and aspired to a place that could never be his. He dared to love one so far removed by her rank that there could be only trouble for him ahead. Of this intrigue, if indeed it was ever anything more than court gossip, I do not know. I know this, that one night he was seen coming from the palace and was arrested. Upon his person was found a valuable jewel that belonged to the queen." The old Marquis paused for a moment. "And my son, driven to it, confessed that he had secreted himself in the palace after a ball and had stolen this jewel to pay losses he had incurred in gambling. He was permitted to return to his home. His position as one attached to the embassy of a great power would have prevented a public scandal, but he knew that it could never be hidden, and he killed himself after destroying all his private papers. And now, Sir, do you see why no portrait of a suicide and a thief can hang among honest men?"

He sighed. "I sometimes think they are happiest who are childless and can not therefore be wounded as I am. I have told you all. I have revealed what I had tried to forget. I have crucified myself again. And for what."

The other man looked at him pityingly.

"My Lord," he said, "you are tired. Let us walk back to your broad terrace and those comfortable chairs." Courteously he offered his arm.

When they were seated he spoke again. "Let me repay your confidence with what is something sacred to me. I desire to earn your forgiveness for my intrusion." The Marquis bowed. "There need be no question of forgiveness, Sir," he returned. "One who is my old friend's friend, is mine. I confess that I weary now more than I did

and I am too dull to grasp why you demanded so much."

"I am here to tell you," the stranger said. "When you served your queen as soldier and diplomat you could not fail to meet among rulers many instances of those unhappy marriages contracted, by reason of state policy, between royal personages. I ask your attention, my Lord, when I tell you of one case I know well. Nearly half a century ago there was a princess who played with her dogs and pony in her forest castle and thought herself a child. One day she was taken to a palace and married to a king and found herself the head of a brilliant court. Her husband had ruled since he was a boy of twelve. Perhaps some men might have risen above the temptations that were spread before him or failed to abuse his almost unlimited power; perhaps some sterner souls would not have sunk. I only know that he fell a victim to pleasure and there were none to teach him better. And this marriage of which I speak was none of his seeking. His ministers convinced him that since this little princess was an Emperor's grandchild the alliance was necessary.

"The new queen was from the first unhappy. Those romances she had dreamed in her forest castle were shattered now and happiness was not to be her lot. Her king was in the thrall of women practiced in vices whose names she had never heard. For two years she lived her lonely life until she looked only once into the eyes of a man and knew that love was born. He was of noble birth and attached to the embassy of a world-power, a man of wealth and more than common handsome, one whom women had little difficulty in loving."

The stranger looked the old aristocrat in the eyes.

"My Lord, I do not seek to condone those faults which are rightly considered infractions of our man-made laws, but sometimes I permit myself to think that the good God can forgive what we do not understand and pardon when we condemn. I know only that this

poor lonely queen had never loved before, and I know that her splendid lover had been heart whole until he gazed upon her.

"There were three months of perfect happiness and then the king suddenly grew jealous and the queen learned through one of her ladies that he had asked the foreign power to transfer this young lord to a distant legation. There could be no question that this favor would not be instantly granted a king when he asked.

"When they made their last farewells the queen gave him a pearl she had worn, a rose pearl of value that had been part of the king's present to his queen. It was to this young noble something to hold throughout life and to clutch in his dead hands when the last moment should come. As he left the palace he was seized and brought before the king and a minister of state. When he was searched they found the pearl, and the king was confident that his suspicions were right and that this was his queen's present to her lover. He was told that if he confessed he would be allowed to leave the country on pretext of private affairs and no word should ever leak out if he gave his promise never to return. He drew himself to his full height just as I have observed you do, my Lord—for he was of your stature, it is said—and laughed at them. And then he made his confession. He had secreted himself in the palace to steal the queen's jewels to pay his debts of honor. It was known he played for high stakes, as men did in those days, and had of late been unlucky; and it was known that he had borrowed from money-lenders. His story was unshaken and he was per-

mitted to return to his residence. On the morrow the ambassador would be told. That night, my Lord, he managed to send a letter to the queen telling her what had happened and begging her to keep silence just as he would pledge himself to do. And then he did not hesitate, for the sake of the woman he loved, to take that dreadful journey. The queen mentioned his name no more until the hour before her death, yet I think the memory of her three months of happiness was the only joy that was left her."

The Marquis looked at the speaker with burning eyes.

"Sir," he cried huskily, "how do you know this?"

"I know it," said the other, "because in that hour when the queen came to die, she sent for her son and told him what she had not dared to tell any soul before. And she bade him for the sake of one who had died to save her name seek out his people and ask them to think with forgiveness and charity of a woman whose long life had been one of sorrow."

The Marquis looked searchingly into the stranger's face. Old memories were reviving and there was forced upon him the conviction that the man at his side was not wholly a stranger.

"Your Majesty!" he cried, rising to his feet. "Your Majesty!"

"I came to you as a stranger," said the younger, "and as a stranger I must go. And I came with doubt and the fear that you would not hear me; but I had sworn to tell you what I have. It is too late to undo what is past, but has my visit brought any comfort to you?"

"You have given me back my son," the old man answered simply.



HELL:—Where you will surely go when you die, provided you enjoy yourself on earth.



POISE

By Harold de Polo

"MR. TREVENOR has come, Miss Steffens," bowed the obsequious maid from the doorway.

Carolyn turned from the mirror, her arched brows rising higher as she told the maid to inform her caller that she would be down directly.

The door closed once more, she again faced her mirror, a slightly ironic and amused smile turning her perfectly chiseled crimson lips at the corners. Still smiling, she continued deftly managing her gorgeous mass of coppery gold hair that shone like virgin metal under the sunshine pouring in through the windows.

She wondered how he would take it—wondered whether or not he would prove a new type in meeting disappointment. She hoped so, but she feared not. Men, as far as she knew, were about all the same. Most of them had taken it a bit differently, of course—but all of them had nevertheless, although not really literally, whined or cried or sulked or raged when she had informed them that she had decided to terminate their engagement. All of them, of course, immediately got down on bended knees and orated of their great love and broken heart and ruined life. Yes; and that, chiefly, was just the good sport of the game—for that was all it was to her, a game! . . .

Young Garry Trevenor, however, had seemed a bit out of the ordinary. Really, as a companion he wasn't half bad—but as for feeling anything deeper, that was impossible. All men were alike in meeting a blow—a certain type of coward. In all her experience—and for her twenty-odd years they had been

many—she had never known one to take the matter as a true sportsman!

Again she smiled. Still, that was a compliment to herself. She was very beautiful and very desirable, that she knew. Even without the wealth that would be hers, she would have attracted men anywhere. Her marvelous hair, the cream of her skin, the turn of her lips, the turquoise of her eyes, the poise of her head—yes, she was very beautiful, there was no conceit in admitting an established fact! . . .

And with a final touch to her hair, a last artist's dab of the powder puff, she rose to go and meet the man whose wife she had promised to be after his arduous siege on board the ship returning from England.

As she entered the room, there was one thing at least that she gave him credit for—he didn't try to rush forward and clasp her in his arms and ruin the effect of her costume. Instead he came forward with his jolly smile, took her hand, and kissed it ever so lightly as he bent gallantly over it:

"Hullo!" he said laughingly. "You look awfully fetching in your tennis rig, Caro!"

This, too, wasn't so bad—for most of them instantly launched forth into ecstasies of her beauty and all that:

"It's at least cool," she returned, "and it's unbearably warm up here today. I really might as well have stayed in the town house!"

"Yes, I could hardly fan up a breeze in the racer, even though I did put her up to decent speed!"

"But come outside on the verandah," she said, "and sit down and be comfortable and smoke!"

In the huge wicker chairs, with his cigarette going, he looked at her silently, admiringly, through the haze of the smoke:

"Do you know," he said lightly, yet seriously, "that it all seems very wonderful to me—meeting you in London, loving you, the run over on the steamer, and winning you! It's really awfully jolly!"

This was at least a new way of putting it, she decided—certainly he was calm about the whole thing.

"Yes?" she murmured softly, in that cool, musical voice that reminded one of the gentle and alluring clink of cracked ice in a long glass on a hot summer day.

"Stopped on the way and picked up a little ring. Hope you like it? Change it to anything else if you don't!"

She took the tendered object from his hand—a huge and perfect emerald that blazed a gorgeous green against the surrounding diamonds.

Idly she looked at it—but she wasn't thinking of the ring. She was wondering just how he'd take her next words:

"I'm sorry, Garry, but I can't accept it! . . . I've changed my mind!"

He laughed. "Oh, come, Caro—it's too horribly hot this morning to quiz a chap so!"

With that little turn to the corners of her lips she regarded him. "But I don't happen to be quizzing—I've changed my mind! I simply have, that's all!"

For an instant he didn't answer. Then, easily: "You really mean just that?"

"Just that," she told him. Then, to further rake the fires for the outburst that always came: "You really didn't think, dear boy, that our little flirtation was anything more than a steamer affair that helped pass away some tedious hours, did you?"

The outburst she expected didn't come. Instead he smiled—but it was a grave smile.

"Frankly I did. I love you, of course—that goes without saying. I

wouldn't have asked you to be my wife if such hadn't been the case. Also, I really thought you loved me! We seemed to get along swimmingly, you know, and I rather thought we'd make an ideal pair!"

Carolyn was almost stunned. She didn't quite understand this poise—she'd never seen it before under like conditions. Still, perhaps he'd break out later. But what an adorable smile he had—she'd never noticed it was so nice before. However, she tried again:

"Here—your ring," she said. Usually they begged anew at this stage.

He looked rueful. "Oh, I say! Even if it isn't customary, won't you keep the beastly thing? *I've* no use for it and it may remind you of a pleasant little flirtation, if it *was* pleasant, that helped to pass off some of those stupid hours!"

Her hand paused, rigid, in midair. For a moment or so she didn't speak. Certainly she was surprised, for never had she dreamed that a man would retain such perfect poise after a ruthless rejection by her beautiful and desirable self; then, too, she was disappointed, perhaps the least bit chagrined at having had herself held so lightly; and, lastly, she somehow couldn't help admiring and liking more than formerly this nonchalant young man whom she had believed would be down in the depths of despair!

"Thanks—I shall," she returned, a little dully, for once lacking even the courage to further refuse him.

"Thank you, rather," he laughed cheerily. "I shall always consider it a high honour to think you occasionally deign to wear it!"

She studied him through lowered lashes—the frank face, the firm mouth, the agreeable brown eyes, the lithe grace of his faultlessly garbed figure. She spoke—almost pettishly:

"Then it was nothing more than a mere ship flirtation for you, too? Just a game to pass the hours and perhaps enjoy somewhat?"

Again his answer surprised her. He leaned forward and looked her square-

ly in the eyes—a look that, somehow, compelled her own to meet them. His voice was more serious than she had ever heard it:

"No, you're quite wrong. It wasn't an idle flirtation, a passing of time, a game and nothing more. I love you—really love you—the first deep love I've had in my life. Unfortunately, I thought you felt exactly the same toward me! Oh, no; there's no denying it's a big blow, for I sincerely thought we'd be very, very happy! However, as you were simply playing the game, certainly that is your privilege and certainly it would not be the sportsmanlike thing to howl and rant about losing out, would it? . . . Oh, no; I really love you—tremendously!"

"Oh—oh," was all that Carolyn said, a new and strange emotion suddenly gripping her.

Another of those laughs that she realized she liked came to her almost through a haze.

"Oh, I say. I hope I'm not boring you? I'll rush along if I am, you know?" And he half-rose.

It was Carolyn, for the first time under like circumstances, who lost her poise. She moved forward, her slim, firm, tapering hand resting on his knee.

For once she had seen a man who could take his medicine bravely; for once, too, she really was sure that here was a man who liked her for herself alone; for once, too, she believed that here was a man who truly loved her, and who would truly make her happy; and again, for once, here was a man to whom her heart had suddenly gone out, thoroughly, passionately, deeply!

"No—no, you're not—boring me," she half-whispered, her eyes big and moist. "I—I've just learned that you're the only man who hasn't—I've just learned that you're the only man I have ever loved—really loved with—all of me! . . . I—can you forget that I was ever such a—such an idiot— . . . Garry—dear?"

He rose, her hand in his, and looked down at her with that whimsical smile that made her want to meet his lips.

"Sorceress," he bantered, half-playfully, half-tenderly, "you're not playing now?"

"No, Garry, dear, I'm not," she told him, with the sincere simplicity of the real woman in her.

And then, suddenly, she found herself in his arms, with a light in his eyes that was wonderful to see and that told her that the world was at last complete!



MY NEIGHBOR'S WIFE

By W. F. Jenkins

SHE is thin and angular. Her features are sharp, her hands are boney, and she takes no care of her nails. She meddles. There is no gossip that she does not know and peddle for other choice bits of scandal. She spies on her other neighbors, and tattles, to make trouble. Her figure is that of an ironing-board. She is an economical woman—her children look half-fed.

I look at her and wonder. Years ago, I called her "Honey!"



GHOSTS

By Paul Hervey Fox

THE circumstances that led Augusta Rushton to hide in her own garret were of a curious nature.

Augusta Rushton was an odd compound of primness and prettiness. Her cheeks glowed delicately with colour, her eyes were a soft blue and pale with light; but these physical characteristics veiled a contradiction of spirit—her austerity. Secretly she was aware that this very austerity was motivated merely by a dread of public opinion. Of scandal she stood in grotesque terror; and she had so modelled her life as to win, and deserve, the reputation of being a high priestess of the proprieties.

If it had not been for this dominant trait, she would, perhaps, have very early succumbed to her own private desires and the frank hortations of her husband, big, genial Bob Rushton, and secured a separation. She didn't get along at all well with her husband. Those minute observances which she most highly honoured were regarded by Rushton with a careless eye. So she quarreled with him—in a low voice.

They had been married nearly six years when occurred that string of amazing incidents which so suddenly tinted her sober life with fantastic hues. Rushton was bound for the south from the New England town in which he lived on a motor-trip that was designed to combine a matter of business with a casual outing. Augusta was to accompany him for the brief tour of a fortnight. She had sent the servants away, bolted the windows, and completed her packing on the evening before the scheduled departure. Every-

thing had slid upon smooth wheels during the day, and she nursed the speculation that she and Bob might, in time, really grow to tolerate each other.

They rose before sunrise. They had reckoned an early start necessary, but they had not reckoned upon the stupor, the grumpy humours attendant upon an early awakening, balladists of the simpler life to the contrary. At the slap-hazard breakfast which Mrs. Rushton prepared, Bob swore at least twice, and finally popped forth the old touchy question of their marriage.

"Why the devil won't you agree to let things drift?" he growled. "What's the sense, I ask you, what's the sense of . . ."

The hour was hardly adapted to a polite discussion of matrimonial differences. Augusta snapped back some irrelevancy, and Bob retorted in a high voice.

"Hush!" said Mrs. Rushton swiftly. "Do you want to wake people up? Do you want them to know how we, how you . . ."

"That's it! That's the whole deuce an' all. You're afraid people will talk. Now look here, Augusta, I'll make you a proposition. You know when I say it, that it's as good as done. I'll split things half and half with you—on my honour I will—and you can clear out to that Hillsfield place you liked so much last summer where nobody knows you. As for me I'll quit this town and go West, and—"

She interrupted him with an irritating laugh. "How long before people would know? Someone would get wind of the business somehow, and in about

a week the story would be everywhere. The only way we could ever separate would be to die. I, at least, have a reputation to keep up. I, at least, have—"

"There's the kick of the situation," he burst in angrily. "It's the only thing that frightens you. You don't care a whistle for the thing itself, not you, but you're in a panic over what people will say about the thing. . . . Well, I shan't run away unless you agree; you know that. I'm fair enough, I guess. But I don't see why you won't give up this rotten pretense. Are you always going to lie down and howl for fear of your neighbors?"

As she felt this charge to be true, and had no answer to deny it, Augusta promptly switched the theme and attacked in a different quarter.

"Perhaps," she remarked with icy precision, "you think I'm going on this trip while you are in this unspeakable temper. You may go alone."

He grunted out a short laugh. "All right. Stay here if you want. You said that the only way we could ever separate would be to die. Well, in a general sense, I'm beginning to think that's true. But here's a little while where it isn't. And you don't need to hope that I'm going to coax you to come."

After that, of course, nothing could have induced her to retract her impulsive statement, and with tears of mortification in her eyes she peered at him through the thick curtains as he backed the car from the garage and drove rapidly down the silent street.

It was not sunrise even yet and the chances were that none of the neighbors had seen him depart alone. Another woman might have told a simple lie to the effect that she had changed her mind at the last instant, but Augusta feared even the mild suspicion of a quarrel which such a statement might excite. Her mind shot instinctively to a scheme of concealment.

The maids were away; her friends believed her gone also. But there was a supply of things in tins, edible enough, in the pantry, and books and a

paper due every evening on the porch. It would be a capital idea, she thought, to take a secret holiday in her own house, undisturbed by the ringing of bells and the accustomed social intercourse.

She drew the shades promptly, and with a queer little sense of deviltry, stepped through the quiet rooms with the eye of an explorer. She had converted her dwelling into a gaol, and found herself examining her environs with a new interest.

The next three days passed quietly, so quietly that they seemed to serve as an artistic introduction to the fourth. So far, each day's only adventure had been her sally in the evening to capture the paper. She would wait till the fall of dark, slide the door open a little with infinite caution and patience, and then grope with one hand over the mat where the paper was invariably flung. Late at night she would roll up the sheet and replace it so that she might not arouse the suspicions of the newsboy.

At first she was in some doubt as to the possibility of staying up at all at night, for she dared not show a light where neighbors might discern it. There finally came to her mind the inspiration of employing the garret at the top of the house as an evening-room. As this gave access to the outer stairs through a single skylight, Mrs. Rush-ton felt herself comparatively safe in switching on the light here after dark. Only the fantastic potentiality of one of her dreaded neighbors taking a spin in an aeroplane could threaten her discovery in this attic!

On the fourth day she rose with a faint, strange sense of foreboding. She breakfasted upon tea and crackers and marmalade and wondered the wherefore of her vague depression. This loneliness, she reckoned, was telling on her; she hoped that the full two weeks wouldn't seem insufferable. That brute of a husband of hers—wasn't he despicable! But whatever happened she must keep her presence in the house a secret.

Some time in the vicinity of noon the 'phone rang. Mrs. Rushton was perplexed. She had told all her friends that she was bound away; surely it couldn't be one of their number. Why not answer it? And yet, if it should prove to be one of those friends—! She walked back and forth, her knuckles pressed nervously to her lips, while the insistent jangle went on. It was—hateful. She wanted to answer it, she didn't want to answer it, she did, she didn't . . . Then quite suddenly the 'phone gave it up, gave it up with, somehow, a stabbing implication that it had had important news which warranted no neglect.

All that day her suspense seemed to grow tighter. At the end of the afternoon she caught a peep of Mrs. Hillerson, her nearest neighbor, standing on her porch listening to someone who had just drawn up in a car. Mrs. Hillerson, as far as Augusta could judge, seemed visibly perturbed with a hint of incredulity in her attitude. Suddenly she turned and stared earnestly at the Rushton house. Augusta, with the feeling that she was being observed conquering her common-sense which denied that fact, drew back with a start.

II

SOMETHING had happened; that much was clear; but what it was she could not fathom. Had someone heard, or even seen her in the house, and set afloat some story of thieves? Mrs. Rushton trembled. To be surprised in her home, to be discovered there in guilty hiding—what catastrophe could be more hideous? For half a moment she deliberated precipitate flight. The risks of such a procedure whilst the house was apparently under survey caused her to choose the lesser perils of remaining in her prison.

She was more than usually cautious that evening when she captured the fresh newspaper. This maneuver successfully executed, she climbed the attic stairs and switched on the light. She

had devoted her attention during the three previous days to the furthering of her comforts. She had brought up an old gas-stove, since there was a pipe attachment let into the wall. On this she could cook cocoa and other simple preparations. This evening she had ransacked library and pantry to make the long hours as pleasant as possible.

The food in tins and boxes, amid a litter of utensils and small plates lay upon a settee to the right. On an old table at the left were a heap of periodicals and books. The garret with its bleak flooring and strange miscellany of trunks, decrepit furniture, garden-tools, and small odds-and-ends, presented an odd background for Mrs. Rushton. Neat to a point of painfulness, she was one of those few people who attire themselves with as much care for a private occasion as for a public one. There she sat with her glowing cheeks and soft hair, clean and sweet and suavely gowned, in the midst of haphazard heaps of rubbish and bric-a-brac.

She picked up the paper and her eyes fell upon the black headlines that usurped the summit of the principal column. She dropped the sheet with a curious feeling of indigestion, a reaction that seemed impossibly prosaic, even ludicrously so. Then followed a sensation more attuned to the shock she had received. She felt that she was going mad. With a frantic gesture she caught up the paper once more and stared at the item with dizzy eyes. The leading caption ran:

R. RUSHTON AND WIFE KILLED IN RAILROAD ACCIDENT

The late Mrs. Rushton proceeded to read the account of her demise. She read it meticulously three times before she could capture its significance. Then she read it three times more that she might carefully digest the intelligence. So queer did things seem that for a moment Augusta harbored the insane notion that she really had died and had

come back, a kind of preposterous, fleshy spirit, to inhabit those halls in which she had formerly dwelt.

On the last reading reason returned, and logic put forth its assured contentions. Rushton, went the newspaper account, was speeding over a railroad crossing at Salmonville when a fast express struck his car. He and his wife (who alone was with him) were hurled beneath the wheels of the train and had been so mutilated as to defy identification. Letters and a bill-fold in the pocket of Rushton had, however, revealed his name; and the car's license was ascertained and found to belong to him. Such were the plain details of the story.

To Mrs. Rushton after the first few moments of high bewilderment, the story within the story seemed quite apparent. Over Bob's awful death she could only shudder; she was a cold woman and she had no tears for his loss, only a spirit of forgiveness now that the past was so completely the past. She was shocked, but that was all. And the shock was tempered by a Puritanic sense of justice. Bob, in his unrighteousness, caring nothing for her good name or his, had induced some woman to accompany him, and Fate had struck him down blindly. It was — it was dreadful!

Then a second consideration dawned upon Mrs. Rushton, a consideration which, striking home, startled her more than her first reflection. How could she ever appear in public again and give the lie to the story of her own death without winning the name of a neglected wife? The story of her husband's death, trapped by destiny in the hour of his unfaithfulness, would eternally precede her, hover over her, mock her, render her life a thing of hollowness, a smiling hell.

She pressed her hands to her forehead and tried to think. How could she escape the venomous fangs of scandal? If she should reveal her presence here now, her secret lodging in her own house, what a storm it would prove for malicious tongues! She shut her eyes

and from her lips crept a little sound of wretchedness. She was paying a weightier penalty than poor Bob whose broken body could now hold nothing of anguish, nothing of hot regret.

The revelations of an hour had struck her wits into a kind of protective numbness; and she drew up her chair and made an attempt to eat. She did things mechanically, moving in an abstraction that her consciousness interposed between her and the agony of reflection.

When she was at length stirred from her lethargy, it was due to an external, physical cause. She was sitting very still with an air that was pathetic in its suggestion of futility when a faint sound came to her ears. It was the sound of someone entering the house. She rose to her feet with a little gasp and moved to the door of the attic.

Footsteps, that were obviously of a stealthy sort, came to her hearing, distinct, regular, methodic.

She remained in the doorway scarcely breathing.

Who could it be?

She could jump to only one conclusion; someone who had heard the report of the accident had taken a prompt opportunity to enter the supposedly empty house. The thought of a burglar prowling about below did not alarm her in one sense, for she was physically brave. Indeed, she desired earnestly to step downstairs, arm herself with the revolver in the second drawer of the bureau, and meet the thief on his own terms. But she dared not, lest in doing so, she should bring about her detection.

For a minute she stood there in a distress of hesitations; then she heard the footsteps slowly mounting the stairs. They turned into the hallway, passed on, swung around the bend of . . . she did not wait any longer. With awkward fingers she switched off the light, and fled on tiptoe for the shadows of the corner. Here a pile of old trunks offered refuge, and she crouched down behind them and held herself rigid, her mind now visualizing

wildly and vividly each stray conjecture.

She waited there, she thought, for hours; her body seemed to stiffen and grow brittle. Then again she heard the footsteps. She judged that the invader was a man from the clumsy way in which he appeared to muffle his footfalls.

The next instant the footsteps grew nearer.

He was mounting the attic stairs!

She waited tensely, then her nerves gave a jerk, and she gripped the trunk-end with tight fingers. It seemed as if a great flood of radiance had been poured over her. . . . He had merely switched on the light.

She attempted to define his movements by their sound. Now that she had resisted her first impulse to withstand him, she was amazingly frightened by his presence.

She heard a low ejaculation slip from his lips.

He moved forward. There came a delicate clatter of china. Apparently he was examining the remains of her recent meal. At that moment he muttered something like an oath and sped swiftly for the door; a silence fell.

Listening, Mrs. Rushton discovered what had startled him.

Someone else was entering the house!

III

SHE heard the wheezing slam of the front door, after that the sound of two voices in low consultation, and then a noise of footfalls. The man at the attic door was listening in a dead stillness. A long time passed and he did not move. The voices, the footsteps, of the newcomers grew nearer, and Augusta was suddenly conscious that they were women. Then the explanation of their presence came home sharply. The night before her planned departure she had given Mrs. Hillerson a key. This party could only be Mrs. Hillerson and some friend, idly investigating the house now that the report of her death was abroad.

The voices drew nearer still. Mrs. Rushton heard the man at the door take a careful step forward. Horrified as she was at the prospect of being discovered by the eminently proper Mrs. Hillerson, her curiosity concerning the thief suddenly mastered all other matters. She rose cautiously so that her eyes just topped the edge of the trunk. The man was facing her, and stared at her as she rose. For one terrible second she returned that silent gaze, and then he switched off the lights. She sank back limply to her original position. The man she had seen was her husband!

It was one of the few occasions in her life when Mrs. Rushton wished to scream. Her mind set about its maddening trick of explaining. It wasn't her husband that she had seen; it was some double of his, come to impersonate him in this chance situation. It was her husband, and he, or someone else, had played a huge, practical joke in the story of his death. But why, why was he so frightened? Had he committed a murder? Had he—her further speculations were interrupted by the opening of the door. Mrs. Hillerson—and now her voice proclaimed that it was undeniably she—had stepped into the room with her companion. Evidently she had provided herself with a candle, for long dull streaks of light went whipping across the ceiling and fluttering like pennants upon the walls. Her lack of any outcry made it clear that Rushton had hidden himself.

Mrs. Hillerson in a strange, hushed voice was talking to the woman with her.

"Yes," she was saying, "this is the attic in the house—a big roomy place. I've been in it many times."

The other woman made a little sound of dismay. "Isn't it— isn't it terrible!" she murmured. "I wish you hadn't brought me here. We can't do any good, and I feel somehow as if I were taking some sort of unfair advantage of them. I feel as if they were watching me somehow, as if—"

"Don't be afraid," said Mrs. Hillerson still in her soft voice. "I knew we couldn't do any earthly good in coming in to look around, but I felt as if I had to do something. . . . Wasn't it a shock!"

"I hate to think of it. And he—he was always so nice. Sometimes, you know, I really think I didn't like her. She seemed so critical and she set such a terribly prim standard."

Mrs. Hillerson laughed very quietly. "You knew, dear, didn't you, that they quarreled dreadfully? I've heard it said often and often that it was only the fear of the notoriety that prevented Augusta from leaving him."

The other woman made a little sound of repugnance. "Don't—don't let's talk about them that way! I feel as if their ghosts were up here in this garret now, as if I were being overheard—it's an awful night—it's . . . Let's go downstairs now and leave the house. There's no sense in staying here."

"Very well," assented Mrs. Hillerson, and led the way. Their footsteps grew fainter. Only the sound of their tones reached the ears of Augusta Rushton. Then the door was closed faintly, and silence fell over the house.

Augusta could stand the suspense no longer. She stepped from behind her barricade and turned on the light. As she did so the intruder arose from under a rug in one corner and coolly brushed his clothing. He was unmistakably her husband.

"Well," said Augusta in a sharp, trembling voice. "What have you got to say for yourself?"

So odd was the question that Rushton burst into laughter. "Quite yourself, my dear, aren't you?" he commented.

She answered him hurriedly: "Bob, Bob, what's happened? I don't know where I am. Please tell me what has occurred! Mrs. Hillerson thinks you're dead, and you're here, and I—"

"One moment. I'll answer everything in detail. You don't seem to be particularly delighted to learn of my escape, by the way!"

"Your escape? she flung him. "You recovered from the accident?"

He grinned cheerfully. "I wasn't in it. I made the acquaintance of a pair of swindlers on the route. Said they were going my way, so I took 'em along. Next day, on a lonely road, they buncoed me into getting out of the car. When I turned, the chap was at the wheel. They ran away before I could snap my fingers."

"Yes, and then?"

"Why, then, apparently, the Johnnie ran into a train. My coat was in the car and I suppose he must have put it on beforehand. That's all."

"You—you," she stammered. "I don't believe your story!"

"Very sorry," returned Rushton with elaborate irony.

She tried other tactics. "What are you going to do?"

"Ah, that's a different matter. When I left you a few days ago, my dear Augusta, I decided I wasn't going to be the fool of my principles any longer. I figured, in short, that when I got back here I was going to seek a separation whether you wanted it or not. . . . Well this thing came up, and I had a flash. Might as well do the decent thing by you since I can. . . . This house isn't worth a penny with that back mortgage. As for the furniture, let that go to Cousin Carrie. She needs it, poor devil."

"I don't understand," interrupted Augusta.

"Well," Rushton went on, "the first thing I did when I heard of the accident was to draw out my funds at a bank before they had the story. If they notice the discrepancy in time they'll think it was a misprint in the paper. Now I'm willing to split things with you, and a handsome offer I call it. You can go to Hillsfield at the end of nowhere, and dress like a widow, and take up church work. I'll raise a mustache and go West. No one will ever recognize us, and if anyone does, we can explain it with the old 'double' fiction."

"Bob," protested Augusta, "are you—"

"No, I'm not crazy. But remember what you said: 'The only way we could ever separate would be to die.' Well, we're dead all right, quite dead. And I'm going to remain so. I imagine with your innate horror of talk, you'll prefer to be a ghost also, eh?"

She did not hear him as he continued. Her mind was busied with the bizarre possibilities of the scheme. Suddenly she decided.

"Very well, Bob," she said, and her voice shook with a nervous laughter, "I think I'll—I think I'll die too! . . ."

IV

A FRIENDLY mist was rolling across the land as they let themselves out by the back way and followed a footpath to the street. Augusta was heavily veiled, and Rushton's high coat was buttoned up to his ears. At the station they hung back in the shadows till the nine o'clock train came in; and then they clambered into the rear car and occupied the last seat.

An hour later they descended at Har-

rison Junction. The express that was to carry Rushton towards the West was due in a few moments. Augusta's train, however, would not be in for another hour. Presently the great engine of the Western express rumbled up to the platform, panting and choking in the cool night air. The round iron throat poured out thick smoke dotted with dull red sparks. Everything was suddenly alive, noisy, and vigorous.

Rushton got up, and took the risk of removing his hat. "Good-bye, my dear," he said with a quiet smile. "After all, we have had some good times together. In some ways I'm sorry, but this is best. Well, anyway . . . lots of luck!"

He mounted the steps briskly.

Augusta waved her hand. She felt incredibly romantic, felt somehow as if she were suddenly free from distasteful fetters. The bonds had been broken, smashed by the last adventure, for—as she saw the huge train clattering away into the night, cleaving the grey-ness of the mist under a cold moon—she felt very much like something quite unearthly, like something that was veritably a ghost.



THE CAT

By Beatrice Redpath

YOU with your white hands crossed
 And the cat upon your knee;
 Firelight and the shadow of firelight upon you
 And I standing silent beside the door
 Know that as the cat is content with the warmth
 And the comfort of your hands,
 So would you be content
 With the ease I have provided
 Should I be gone forever.



WHEN a woman cries before a man, she is either quite confident of him, or quite hopeless of him.

EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTED

By Hayden Jameson

A MAN went forth to choose a wife. He had theories about what a wife should be, for he had had many adventures with women and had known many other men's wives. He not only knew what a wife should be, but he also knew what a wife should not be.

The chisel of experience had hewn his ideal of wifehood to fine lines.

He was more fortunate than most seekers of wives. He found Her. Although not carried away by boyish dreams, nor deluded by the false voice of passion, nor lured by the tongue of flattery, he discovered in her the presence of everything a wife should be and the absence of everything a wife should not be.

Just as he was about to marry her, he found another about whom he could discover nothing. Because she puzzled him, he married her.

Moral: Always find out what they think they want, and give them something else.



SHE

By Horace Holley

SHE is the ewe lamb I tend by the hills of devotion.
She is the tigress I flee through the desert of shame.
She is the tempest that shatters my rock in the ocean.
She is the vision I follow, the path that I came.



IT is the nature of women to look for the woman at the bottom of every trouble, in order to sympathize with her.



A HAPPY married man is one who trusts his wife. A happy married woman is one who only suspects her husband.



ALL art is a sort of beautiful spite.

AN APOLOGY FOR BOCCACCIO

By Christopher Morley

I

BOCCACCIO was born in Paris in 1313, the impromptu son of an Italian merchant who had come to the French capital to "look over the spring line." The father was perhaps not as honest a man as O. Henry's buyer from Cactus City, but he had no wish to shirk his due responsibilities, and young Giovanni was sent as a child to join his parent in Florence. He was put into business in Naples, endured the vicissitudes of clerkship and was finally sent out as a travelling salesman. This calling, then as now, was marked by a happy-go-lucky companionship with all sorts of people, and it is interesting to note how many of Boccaccio's tales deal with the haps and mishaps of merchants "on the road."

Commercial travellers have always been great tellers of tales, generally racy tales. The drummer of the fourteenth century must have had abundant opportunity to develop that inquisitive and zestful interest in all the aspects of life which is characteristic of the short-story writer. We do not know what Boccaccio's "line" was, but at any rate he and his case of samples visited many a town in the days when expense accounts showed no Pullman fares. He was fleabitten at many an Italian inn, polished the rim of many a tankard, and exchanged many an anecdote in the course of his journeyings. His portrait shows him a keen, quick-witted, thoughtful youth, wide of gaze and with high-arched brows.

But salesmanship was not his dream.

He was always tinkering with verses. He left a trail of sonnets behind him while his competitors were booking re-orders. If remittances from the home office were delayed he helped pay his board bill by scrawled canzoni, for landlords in those days were lovers of neatly turned verses. Doubtless he gained quite a reputation in commercial circles as the rhyming drummer. Ultimately his distaste for business (or the dissatisfaction of his firm) ended this period of his career.

He studied law in Naples, subsisting on a pittance from his well-to-do but close-fisted father. But he was biting his nails for rhymes rather than poring over the statutes. At twenty-five he yielded to his overmastering impulse and became a professional literary man.

As I have said, he had always yearned to write. An interesting autobiographical fragment (quoted by J. A. Symonds) tells how before he was seven, almost before he could write, he was muttering rhymelets to himself. He wooed many women before Fiammetta came along; but his true mistress was the Muse, and to her he dedicated his most passionate devotion. The famous sentence on his tomb must have been the thought of one who was himself a poet—*STUDIUM FUIT ALMA POESIS*. One despairs of translating the simple tenderness of the words. He died in 1375.

II

THE above is very nearly all that we know of Boccaccio's life. Our concern is with the Decameron, and to ap-

preciate that we need to know what manner of man he was rather than the details of his career. Remember, then, that it was written just after the Black Death of 1348 had poisoned Italy and gripped the hearts of men with deadly fear. It was written by a man of thirty-five or so who had seen much of life, a man full of humour and tenderness and ribaldry, a man who expressed as well as anyone the double attitude of the middle ages towards woman—the utmost reverence for woman in the abstract, as idealized in the Mother of Christ; combined with an unabashed willingness to kiss every pretty barmaid whom he met.

It will be well to say something on this topic of medieval love, for making love was the great pastime of the middle ages, and most of the tales in the Decameron deal with amourettes. It is all most fantastic to our modern eyes, very exciting, very brightly coloured, but with a touch of grossness. Remember first that in the middle ages the unwedded woman was almost unknown. The old maid, the chaste spinster, the maiden aunt—you will seek in vain for them outside the nunnery. You will find in Shakespeare (and that is 200 years later) ladies who declare an intention of dying unwed, but all flappers say that, and Shakespeare's women always change their names in the last act. Have you ever thought that there was no such word as "Miss" in English literature until comparatively lately?

It comes then to this, that in the middle ages when you fell in love, really seriously in love, it was with a married woman, not your own wife, but someone's else. And medieval love (as far as we can gather) and at any rate Italian love, was a more serious thing than the modern passion. It demanded instant satisfaction, and if not satisfied was generally fatal. It came like a flash of lightning. As treated in the Decameron it appears as charmingly and naïvely extravagant and irresponsible. Shakespeare tells us that "Men have died, and worms have eaten

them—but not for love!" But Shakespeare's love is almost modern and quite different from Boccaccio's. In the Decameron healthy young men *do* die of it, blooming young women are brought in a few days to death's door, but a moment's glimpse of the adored one sets their pulses leaping again. The countess falls in love with the steward and sends him word of her passion. He thinks it only a ruse to test him and asks for a sign. Accordingly she kills her husband's favorite hawk, tugs out a hank of his beard, and pulls out one of his most useful teeth; and the steward is satisfied. The sequel of the magic pear tree is one of the cleverest things imaginable, but I must not deal with it here.

Besides the much-imposed-upon husband, the all-enduring wife was a favourite theme for the medieval tale-teller, and this plot continued a universal favourite until the modern feminist movement began. Boccaccio's famous extravaganza of Griselda ("Patient Grizel") is perhaps the most imitated story in literature. Medieval lovers were capable of anything, would believe anything—I can vouch the popular ballads to warranty, or Boccaccio's lady who was easily persuaded that the Angel Gabriel was sore enamoured of her. "I told you that my charms were celestial," was her remark to the evangelist who brought the tidings.

And so in general the love that we have to deal with in medieval literature is the love for someone's else wife, and the favourite butt of the medieval jest is not the mother-in-law, but the deceived husband. Shakespeare is modern and not medieval, but he put it well enough:

*The cuckoo then on every tree
Mocks married men, for thus sings he,
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Oh word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!*

And after all, there was a certain fairness about it. Girls were married willy nilly in their early teens to the

husband chosen for them by their father or brothers. And so when the fascinating Pietro came whispering in the garden in the moonlight the back door was left ajar and the game of love went on merrily. There are very few husbands in the Decameron who do not suffer from righteous jealousy. In those days this was all a matter of course. There is a charming *alba* (or dawn-song) by a Provençal troubadour of the thirteenth century, supposed to be sung outside the windows of the wife and her lover to warn them of the return of her husband. The point is that the singer expressly prays the aid of the Almighty for his friend and invokes confusion upon the jealous spouse. The Lord is all on the side of the medieval lover and the husband is nowhere. So-called platonic love is far to seek and medieval lovers are not content with what W. S. Gilbert (and Andrew Marvell before him) called "a vegetable love." Love is a blind, imperious passion. The Decameron is a book for bachelors, not for married men.

It is almost impossible to discuss such a matter with delicacy today. "I am a most fanatical lover of plain physical sensations, plainly and expressly rendered," wrote R. L. S. "But to treat love as I treated David Balfour's fatigue in the heather—my dear sir, there were grossness ready made. And hence, how to sweeten?"

There is the contrast. The modern asks how to sweeten, and passes over it with a certain shudder. We have learned to emphasize the spirituality of the love affair. But in the fourteenth century men were not so delicate. One side of love was as seemly as the other, and polite society regaled itself with the ancestors of the jests that one now hears in the club-car. In those days women were admitted to the one shrine that men nowadays hold unstormed by the suffragette—the masculine jest. Let women have the vote, let them sit in Congress, let them wear trousers, what you please, but do not allow them to share the masculine jest!

In the Decameron they do share it, and it is not always pleasant.

And so the sensitive mind that approaches the Decameron, anticipating a great piece of literature, is often horrified, and recoils in disgust. Other minds, not sensitive, find in the book a pleasant storehouse of ithyphallic pungency. Thus we have this comic paradox that the Arabian Nights, those really lewd and dangerously provocative tales, are generally thought of as food for babes; whereas frank old Boccaccio with his broad grin is held to be a rather noisome joint that has been hung far too long and had better be cast in the midden—the sort of book that the fourth-form boy hides in his trunk and reads by candlelight in the dormitory.

But come, asks the sensitive mind. You are trying to be clever. Is not the Decameron "really lewd" too? If not, what is? Is it not only a rather crude source-book, a quarry in which great writers have found huge blocks of stone which they have fashioned into works of art?

One who defends the Decameron as a masterpiece is under a *trinoda necessitas* of manifesting three points:

1. That it is not a mere garner of smut.
2. That where it is obscene (it is undoubtedly so often enough) it is not a poisonous, vicious obscenity—not the obscenity of Dryden or Sterne.
3. That it is a treasure-house in itself alone, had it never been drawn upon by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dryden, Keats, Tennyson and countless others.

These three points I hope to establish.

III

You remember the pleasant passage in one of Lamb's essays where he mentions his discomposure when discovered on Primrose Hill, by one of his lady-friends, reading *Pamela*? He adds: "I should not care to be caught in the serious avenues of some cathedral alone, and reading *Candide*."

Perhaps you may think the embarrassment of being discovered with *Pamela* or *Candide* would be as nothing to that of being found red-handed with a well-thumbed and underlined Decameron. But if a familiar damsel found me on Primrose Hill or in St. Patrick's Cathedral or anywhere else with that book, I would be no whit abashed. I should turn quickly to the ninth story of the fifth day.

The famous story of the falcon (the lineal progenitor of O. Henry's *The Gift of the Magi*) can hardly be summarized without injustice. It needs the grace of Boccaccio's courtly phrases, but even a bald sketch of it will give an insight into his method.

Naturally it concerns love. Federigo, a wealthy and talented young bachelor, falls violently enamored of Madam Giovanna—a married woman, of course. To win her love he leads a life of golden display—lavishly entertains, goes in for the athletics of the day, and becomes very conspicuous among the gentry of Florence, but to no avail. Madam Giovanna, "no less virtuous than fair," pays no heed to him. He spends all his substance in this way, and has to retire to a little farm in the country, where he lives alone, having only his favourite falcon to keep him in meat.

Madam Giovanna's husband dies, leaving her wealthy and alone with her young son. She spends the summer on her country estate which happens to be very near the farm of Federigo. Her son strikes up a friendship with Federigo, and grows particularly fond of Federigo's wonderful falcon. (One must remember that in the middle ages a man's best falcon was his dearest possession.)

Now the son falls ill, and in his sickness cries out for the falcon, which in some childish or delirious whim he thinks is the only thing that will make him well. His mother, after long hesitation, allows maternal affection to override her scruples, and goes (discreetly accompanied by a chaperone) to call on Federigo. Federigo in his poverty

is hard put to it to provide decent entertainment for the ladies, but he bids them stay to lunch and serves them with the best he has.

After lunch Madam Giovanna, in the most gentle way, explains her predicament and asks Federigo if he will be so generous as to let her take the falcon, to save the boy's life. To which Federigo replies that she has had it for lunch, and shows her with tears the feathers, talons and beak of the bird which he has sacrificed. Truly an O. Henry ending!

The story adds a little epilogue; to tell how the boy dies, and the mother later on, when urged by her brothers to marry again, refuses the rich man they suggest and says she will have none but Federigo. "I would liefer have a man ill-provided with wealth than wealth ill-provided with a man."

IV

THIS crude synopsis, of course, loses the delicacy and beauty of the story, the lofty pathos, the loving tenderness with which the smallest details are sketched. It is the greatest and subtlest of tragedies, the tragedy which is perilously near the comic. The actual crux of the tale is (as Sir Walter Raleigh puts it) a mere housekeeper's dilemma. And yet see how Boccaccio has taken the prose stuff of life and elevated it. He uses the commonest details of everyday happening, the very slightest of plots, but his zest of treatment, his huge delight in telling the tale, make it extraordinarily vital.

If you want to see how the courtly grace of the story can be pawed about and mishandled by a great poet read Tennyson's dramatization. To write greatly, Tennyson needed a great theme. Boccaccio had the true story-teller's knack, he can take the most trivial incident and make it significant. Hark to Hazlitt, who knew what he was talking about. He says: "Does not Boccaccio pass to this day for a writer of ribaldry, because his jests and lascivious tales were all that caught the

vulgar ear, while the story of the Falcon is forgotten? There is indeed in B's serious pieces a truth, a pathos, and an exquisite refinement of sentiment which is hardly to be met with in any other prose writer whatever."

We have hit upon one of the secrets of the Decameron. It is the glorious zest and open-hearted abandon with which the tales are told. He is the master narrator who goes about his task in no half-hearted fashion. He throws his whole soul into the story. He has a lingering way of telling his tales, knitting in the little stitches with such a deft, happy touch—we can almost feel the drowsy Italian afternoon, and see the little circle gathered about the fountain in breathless attention. If it be pathetic—well and good, he is pathetic with a will, though now and again trembling on the verge of laughter. "The story told by Fiammetta had more than once brought the tears to the eyes of the ladies, her companions," he says, after the tragic tale of Ghismonda and Guiscardo. For like all great laughers, he has the gift of tears as well. Or if he is to tell a broad farce or a bit of downright obscenity, it is done so merrily, so frankly, so fully, with such evident delight in the carnal details as almost robs it of its sting. It is the triumphant humanity of the man, his passionate interest in all aspects of life, his appetite for reality, that is his defence and his acquittal. As Sir Walter Raleigh said in his lecture on Boccaccio, the secret of the Decameron is the secret of air and light. Brilliant sunshine inundates it. As soon as you open the book you are out of doors. Dirty he may be, but it is an open-air dirt, not the leering hinting innuendo of Sterne—it is unashamed delight in phases of life that are after all very often exceedingly comic.

Of course it would be ridiculous to deny that the Decameron is appallingly licentious in many places. But I sincerely believe that it is not the kind of smut that makes one the worse for having read it. And the amusing thing is that the so-called process of expurga-

tion in general leaves the Decameron worse than before. The tactics adopted by Payne in the large two-volume translation—omitting some passages, and printing others in a medieval French version—such tactics not only expressly call attention to the *pudenda* of the work, but substitute for Boccaccio's inimitable droll frankness a far more vicious suggestiveness. I could support this by parallel quotations, but time presses. Boccaccio's obscenity loses its wickedness by its utter candour. To use a phrase of his own, it is an "honest sprightliness." Nothing is too high nor too low for his great ringing laughter.

No one ever enjoyed sheer farce more than Boccaccio. Like Shakespeare he is wonderfully successful with his fools. There are the delightful trio—Calandrino the Butt, Bruno and Buffalmacco, the practical jokers—who come into several of the tales. If you care to make their acquaintance look up the third story of the Ninth Day or the sixth story of the Eighth Day. The latter of these tales is told by a woman and this suggests a more difficult question. Why did he put these smoking-room stories into the mouths of young ladies—ladies whom he describes thus: "Not one of them had passed her eight and twentieth year nor was less than eighteen years old, and each was discreet and of noble blood, fair of favour and well mannered and full of honest sprightliness"? Why, after one of the most licentious of the tales, does he tell us "A thousand times or more had Dioneo's story moved the modest ladies to laughter, so quaint and comical did his words appear to them"? And one notes with a certain amazement that the whole book is dedicated to the gentle ladies who need some diversion to help them pass away the time!

This seems queer indeed to our notions; but to go a-wayfaring in the fourteenth century with modern eyes is an absurdity. The first and most telling explanation is, that noble ladies of that time really did enjoy tales that

would scandalize a modern sophomore. Remember that a French queen two centuries later wrote the *Heptameron* in frank imitation of Boccaccio, for the amusement of her ladies-in-waiting. Remember, too, that the *Decameron* was the most popular book of the middle ages, and reading the tales aloud was a favourite pastime in all courtly circles, just as Ovid's *Art of Love* was the most thumbed folio in the monastic libraries. But convincing evidence is *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry* (reprinted by the Early English Text Society), a charming work compiled by an Angevin nobleman in 1371 for the instruction of his daughters. Having three motherless girls, and desiring to bring them up as perfect gentlewomen, he wrote this little book, the fourteenth-century *What a Young Girl Ought to Know*. If you will dip into it you will soon see how very different were fourteenth century ideas of stories for young ladies.

It is well, too, to point out that the stories of the *Decameron* begin in irreproachable fashion and the worst ones are all told by one person, the irrepressible Dioneo. The first questionable tale is told by him, and causes some embarrassment—indeed he is “gently chidden” for it. But after this faint reproof, the racier the stories the more the party enjoyed them. Apparently even some of Boccaccio's contemporaries were scandalized by his frankness, for in the Conclusion he vigorously defends himself against criticism. And he adds, with a good deal of wit, “Who-so hath otherwhat to do, doth folly to read these stories!”

In the second place we have Boccaccio's own explanation, given in the magnificent introduction which describes the ravages of the Black Death in Florence in 1348—a description which rivals Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*. The lighthearted part-colored life of the city has been plunged into chaos and filth by the ravages of a loathsome disease. All the ordinary conditions of existence are subverted, the customary reserve and refinement

of polite life is utterly abandoned in the face of this imminent horror, and everyone does what seems best at the moment. Ten young people of good birth, most of their families and relatives dead, flee the stricken city and find themselves sole occupants of a palace where (by the divine dispensation of story-books) rooms are already set with fresh flowers, the cellars stocked with rare wines, even the beds made and the bedrooms aired. When they see themselves lords of this goodly pleasure, and reflect on the scenes they have just been witnessing in the city of death, small wonder that their celebration savours of somewhat extravagant gaiety. Boccaccio, with his tongue in his cheek, seems to suggest this as an apology for the character of some of the stories.

V

BUT the stories themselves are their own justification. Boccaccio would roar with laughter if he heard us gravely discussing whether his tales are really indelicate! His final word is, “There is nothing unseemly as to be forbidden unto anyone, so but he express it in seemly terms.”

Boccaccio the realist is the reaction from Dante the dreamer. Dante wrote the *Divine Comedy*: Boccaccio wrote the *Human Comedy*, long before Balzac and Edgar Lee Masters. Dante tried to reveal what underlies all earthly seemings. Boccaccio finds appearances interesting and important enough. His contemporary and counterpart (not to say pupil) in England is Chaucer, but in many ways the *Decameron* is greater than the *Canterbury Tales*. How much more artistic is the framework in which Boccaccio's stories are set, than Chaucer's device of the *Canterbury pilgrimage*! How can stories be told aloud by a party of twenty-nine stumbling on horseback amid the mud of an English fourteenth century road in April? Against the black background of plague, Boccaccio has set his bright picture of the merry party,

star-scattered on the grass, telling their stories, watching the splash of the fountain, gathering flowers, dancing and singing. Hark to the order of the day. They rise in the cool of the morning and "go somewhither a-pleasuring." By and by they come back for breakfast—about ten o'clock, we imagine. After which they dance or play chess and then sleep through the noontide heat. The afternoon passes away in story-telling and an expedition to the near-by waterfall, where they go paddling in the brook. The girls have charming white legs, we hazard. After sunset comes supper, and in the evening they sing.

So let us not fall into the pedantic error of taking it all too seriously. The Decameron is a great masterpiece and so deserves our respect, but it is also a very glorious bit of foolery and light-heartedness and we must not be too grave about it. While we are cata-

loguing the sources of the tales and noting how the same plots have irrigated fiction ever since, yonder fellow has his feet on the fender and is reading the book with huge enjoyment.

It is indeed a palace of 100 rooms, as someone has said. But it is a medieval palace, and like all such, its sanitation is not quite up to our modern plumbing. It may be that in the cellar the drains have gone wrong, somehow, and in the south corridor (where Dioneo lives) one may sniff shrewdly; but there are broad terraces and flower gardens, too, and from the long upper gallery one commands a fair prospect into the fourteenth century. There are lovely ladies coming down the stair, a trifle broad of speech mayhap, but slender of waist and bright of eye. Wallace Irwin never said better word than this—

*"Better than years with Ibsen spent
One evening with my friend Boccaccio."*



THE SNOB

By Henry Hugh Hunt

THE town drunkard, to-day, was actually and unaccountably sober.

He stood in front of his favorite tavern, gazing pessimistically upon a dull world.

A young man staggered out of the bar-room door and lurched against him.

"Get out, you drunken pup!" exclaimed the town drunkard in deep disgust.



MARRIAGE:—The idea that after a woman has lived with one man for awhile, she will not care for others.



A CHARMING WOMAN:—One who is clever enough to convince you she is not mercenary.



HAPPINESS:—Something your wife would have, if she hadn't married you.

THIS IS THE LIFE

By Gordon Seagrove

YES—marriage is a wondrous thing. Two decades back I met Jeannette while she was fair and I was young. We married, and the first two years were notes from God's own lute of joy. Then came my son, Josephus II, and took his mother's charm away. He worried me. His adenoids were giving trouble constantly. We had them out and now he looks as if he were a hungry goose. And next came troubles with his nose, and heavy bills for handkerchiefs. A fretful boy, he whined and moped until his mother had no peace. I tried to lighten up her load by doing things we used to do; the theatres, a dance or two, a dinner at some smart inn. but she was always tired—so tired! I gave it up. She'd rather read the household page, then fall asleep, than don her clothes and step around.

In later years came dear Marie. (She has my trembling underlip, her mother's former pretty cheeks, and temper

from but He knows where.) Just yesterday she slapped my face, and when her mother interposed she slapped hers, too, and sneered at her. I'm sure I don't know what to do. We planned to let her study voice, but she has other plans in mind; she loves a man, a creature who fingers his amateur mustache and dances the lulu-fado.

I'm growing bald, Jeannette grows drab, I cannot pay my dentist's bill, the office hasn't raised me once, but Joyce (the little upstart pup) has got his—at twenty-six. Josephus II is getting wild . . . a married girl . . . a cheque . . . and booze.

I wish Jeannette could get away and take me, too, to lug her grips—San Quentin or Sing Sing would do. The long cool halls, the quiet cells, the baseball games on Saturdays, the restful sleep on placid nights, the simple food, a few good books—how wonderful they sound to me! I must have rest! I will have rest! Does no one want a murder done?



WORLD WITHOUT END

By Mildred Cummer Wood

FROM a huddle of rotting shacks
The delicate church spire
Pokes a derisive finger
Into the eye of the Lord.



THE TERRORS OF RECRUDESCENCE

By L. Bricconcella

THERE was that in the manner of the old gentleman named Krukirk which occasioned the jejune clerks much mental bedevilment. He was a finicky customer certainly; at the hat shop he had fitted untold chapeaux to his head before making a purchase; the bootwear market exhibited box after box from its stock—and yet his air kept everyone in temper. The front he assumed might well have been called jaunty, and, moreover, it had in it the quality of an additional freshness which to the speculators indicated an only recent adoption of his debonairity.

This much of the clerks' estimate contained a truth. Further they could not be expected to know, for none of them had ever seen Mr. Krukirk before, none recognized his name, and they had no means of probing his inside history. Being in the natural course of things somewhat conventional young men, they might have suffered a trivial moral shock had they surmised that the old gentleman's blithe demeanour had its spring in the death of his nearest and only blood relative.

But it is necessary to correct an almost certain misapprehension. Even Mr. Krukirk himself could not have satisfactorily denied that his almost youthful verve arose solely from his uncle's demise. Yet it must not be supposed that the mere bald noumenon of the death was in itself the unqualified factor of his demeanour. Naturally, the old gentleman must have felt a considerable relief to be done forever with such a troublesome antiquity as his ancient uncle. That venerable dead had been the expected guest of the graveyard at sixty and he had lived queru-

lously on until eighty-five. But Mr. Krukirk, himself now at sixty, had picked up at any rate a certain amount of refinement in his years of living, and he was not the man, however inwardly comforted, to display an open and evident satisfaction at the unadorned shuffle of his uncle. It was indeed a corollary fact which occasioned Mr. Krukirk's buoyancy—no less a matter than his inheritance.

It must not be treasured against the old fellow that he did not take his ascension into the class of coupon-clippers with a greater *savoir-faire*. This would be to ignore entirely the strain of his long expectancy. Twenty-five years earlier he had been momentarily anticipating his wealth, and laid schemes for the manner of life he would lead. Each year of the twenty-five had ushered in a new anticipation, for it is not to be surmised that a diabetic relation can survive his medical attendants' most sanguine prophecies. Yet the apprehended event dragged through the term of a quarter of a century and carried Mr. Krukirk along with it from the ways of a young man to at least the verge of senility.

These two and a half decades of expectation had taken their color wholly from the forecast event. They had been, it might be put, dreamed years. Mr. Krukirk had lived the time visioning all the complex multiplicity of things he would do when at any moment the power of doing was placed in his hands. When he discovered himself past middle life, he stifled regrets with his plans, for he reasoned that his coming money would fashion him into a younger man.

His initial performance, when the estate came finally under his own direction, was the round of the shops. He was almost ashamed to go in fact, wearing the clothes he had been wearing. But his desire chloroformed this squeamishness. He bought lavishly and everything. He purchased all those fancies in apparel which had charmed him years before. He visited tailors and was measured for great varieties of natty suitings. He gathered to himself hats and gorgeous neckties and many odds and ends of jewelry. And eventually, attired as he had long imaged himself, he was able to promenade the street with a satisfaction so openly displayed that it occasioned the curious glances of the crowds.

Had it not been for his attention-arresting manner, Breakridge, the comic opera impresario, would never have scanned him attentively enough for a recognition. Not a few years had passed over since he and Breakridge had been intimate, and the latter had travelled far in the theatrical affairs in the time. He had fought persistently until his first success had come when he staged *The Sun-Shade Girl*, and right at the moment his *Cabaret Girl* was entering its second year's run. Yet after a keen scrutiny Breakridge remembered Krukirk, and at the same instant recollected that his old acquaintance was now a man of some importance, for the death of his uncle and the disposition of the estate had quite naturally gone into the columns of the newspapers.

"It's old Krukirk," he said, extending his large hand,

Mr. Krukirk observed him a few seconds.

"Breakridge" he exclaimed.

"Yes—the same as ever. And you're no different yourself."

"Oh, a little——"

The impresario laughed and offered a green-spotted cigar.

"I'll take that back," he said. "You look younger. You look like those young bucks that sit in the front row to watch Molly."

"Is that a compliment, old man?"

"Well, you know the draw Molly has, I guess."

"That's just it. I don't even know who this Molly is—one of your performers, I suppose—a woman or a trained animal?"

The impresario hooked his arm violently through Mr. Krukirk's.

"You come along with me," he said. "I'm going down to the shop and take you along. A man who doesn't even know the name of *The Cabaret Girl's* star, is going to meet her face to face. Molly Amorette, confound you!"

They fell into mutual quering and reminiscence, and all the while a warming suffusion of content made itself felt in Mr. Krukirk's consciousness. It was just this sort of adventure he had painted so frequently in mental pictures. His money had obtained for him the thing that Ponce de Leon had sought vainly. He was now to meet a beautiful woman, but not an ordinary woman—an actress.

There was a witchery about this term. Only the fortunate few may meet actresses; he had, in fact, never met one of these stage folk. He knew they must be interesting people; they surely led a singular and fascinating life. He, on his part, was not to make any acquaintance from the rank and file, but the supreme goddess—the star! He was so full of a bursting satisfaction at this that he followed in at the stage entrance and failed in his preoccupation to notice the otherwise interesting collection of dismantled scenic properties and the back-scenes mechanisms.

They learned that Miss Amorette was waiting in front in the foyer. Mr. Krukirk moved behind Breakridge's heels around through a dark passage, past a box, and out into the auditorium, which Mr. Krukirk noticed smelt, a trifle fetidly he thought, of departed audiences.

When he was presented to Molly, he found the fulfilment of all his expectancy. She was dazzling and superb—tremendous. But he did not have an immediate opportunity to talk to her.

She was there for business and Breakridge plunged right into it.

"I've got the paper here," he said. "You've decided to sign your name?"

She signified assent, whereupon he drew forth a manuscript, which was in fact a contract, and handing her a gold-banded fountain pen, she scrawled her name upon it. They then shook hands, and Breakridge turned, smiling, to Mr. Krukirk.

"I'm going to leave you with this money-bags plutocrat," he said to Molly, indicating his acquaintance with his obese hand. "If the fellow tries to give you a diamond necklace, don't stop him—he doesn't know how to get rid of his money."

Molly watched the impresario move out into the auditorium.

"He's a wonderful old boy with the blarney, isn't he, Mr. Krukirk," she asked.

"Now, I don't know," said the old gentleman, delighted, "I might do just what he says."

The star of *The Cabaret Girl* laughed and lurched toward Mr. Krukirk alluringly.

"Now, that's what I call a *nice* answer," she said. "I believe we're going to get along just like a pair of ducks, Mr. Krukirk. I never knew men with heaps of bonds and stocks and all sorts of fearful things like that were so easy to talk to."

"Now, how do you know that what old Breakridge says is true?"

"Him! Oh, I wouldn't believe *him*. But you've been in the papers, Mr. Krukirk. Everybody that reads the papers knows about you."

He was, to his disappointment, just the least measure uneasy. It had come suddenly, too, on the top of his initial delight. Dialogue with her was not quite so facile as he might have wished for and he desired to be smart and was very afraid of being stupid. He wondered if all theatrical ladies were quite so effuse. And did they all assume the manner of half a century's acquaintance, even when the actual time did not measure thirty minutes?

Certain vague forebodings, dim from his youth, assailed him, but he could not drag these into a clear definition for his attention was too otherwise occupied. Anyway, this *was* a great adventure, and one of the things he had dreamed. How many men could talk this way privately to the star of *The Cabaret Girl*? Breakridge had mentioned that the front rows were crowded every night with the youngest of young chaps and he had stolen a march on them all!

She led him into conversation about himself, although he would have much preferred a little talk about the theatre and *herself*. He told her that he lived alone, that he enjoyed in fact at present the comforts and discomforts of hotel life.

"You poor man!" she said, with a sugared sympathy.

Mr. Krukirk felt a little alarmed. He did not at all fathom the necessity for her tone.

"Well, not exactly," he said, forcing a little laugh.

"Indeed you are and don't know it," she continued.

He watched her while she swung her chair with a quick hitch of her body into juxtaposition with his own. And he stared when she laid a soft hand over his.

"You poor man," she breathed with the dulcet tone-color used in addressing helpless infants. "All alone in a hotel! Don't your loneliness nearly kill you—don't you ever feel the need of a wife and—a home—"

And she looked at him.

The sugary glints in her eyes swept into Mr. Krukirk's consciousness the heretofore vague remembrances of his younger years. A slow chilling seeped out of his pores. He recollected perspiring in this fashion before, in the times when he had been veritably young and had fallen into the meshes of boarding-house maidens and seaside misses, and had had similar hands laid over his own and had felt things dreadful and irrevocable tottering almost into utterance on his lips. He had forgotten all

this; it had gone in the anesthesia of years.

Mr. Krukirk tugged at his watch wildly and held it inverted in his hand. The actress removed her touch and observed him in some surprise. He arose and walked swiftly to the door.

"A moment," he mumbled indefinitely. "Only just a moment—please—"

He left her sitting there and moved out in great haste, through the lobby and past the box office and into the street.

A cool air blew around his face and he attempted to sweep the disordered cluster of impressions out of his mind. He was more than a little bewildered. It occurred to him presently that his action had possibly not contained the wisdom which its initial conception indicated. He had, no doubt, run out of the theatre like a fool. It would be impossible to face Breakridge now. The woman was a theatrical character, and consequently not mannered precisely on the rigid conventions which regulated other people. She was simply kind and sympathetic and had demonstrated it. And like a silly ass, he had scampered out of her sight He was trying the business of being young, and had made a clotpoll out of himself on his very first adventure.

Dismally he stood on the corner and shook his head. He felt that he needed someone to rake him over the coals, and administer a little tongue chastisement. At once he thought of Anna, his sister-in-law. He had not seen her since he had come into his money, anyway. If he should go to her and tell her about his adventure with Molly Amorette, she would prod him with a little of her entertaining sarcasm and he would unquestionably feel better for it. Anna would be particularly hard on him when she discovered that he had shown any weakness of age. She was peculiarly sensitive on this point, and successfully so, too, he thought. For something more than twenty-five years a widow, she presented herself with nearly as youthful a front as on the day of his brother Ralph's death.

Mr. Krukirk hailed a taxi and gave the driver a number. He had quite a little ride and was jolted around more than he liked. An automobile, big and easy riding, with a chauffeur, was the next item he would add to his purchasing list. Any man was better off with a car of his own, and a good big fast car was the thing for a chap with the youthful spirit. As a matter of truth, a man of this sort would require two cars—a big one when he rode with friends and motored parties out to the country clubs, but in addition he must have a neat run-about, something with a good clever color design and a fast engine

Anna was at home and looking a little younger than he remembered. He knew it for a verity, and yet it seemed incredible that this woman could be close to fifty. Scarcely ten years younger than himself! It only demonstrated how simple a matter it was to be young.

She was profusely glad to see him. He did not recollect that she had ever before displayed herself quite so pleased at a call from him. But perhaps this was only a fancy. She hustled him into her library—she called it her library, and there *was* the *Ladies' Home Journal*—and pushed him into a very comfortable chair and drew up another chair opposite, and close, in which she disposed herself.

"And now, you're going to tell me all about yourself!" she demanded.

"I came to get straightened out," he said to her. "I wanted you to call me down a little"

He related the meeting with Breakridge and the introduction at the theatre and the subsequent conversation (rather inadequately recorded) and his silly flight. She listened to him at first with surprise, and finally with an unmistakable spread of indignation over her features. This was precisely as he had anticipated. He knew with the utmost certainty that his conduct would render her indignant. He completed his recital and waited for the tonic of her ironic comment.

"Do you mean to tell me," she said,

after a short space of silence, "that this woman never saw you before?"

"Of course not, Anna. It was the first time I met her. Wasn't I a regular out and out ass?"

"And she talked to you the way she did?"

"Well, I've given it to you as closely as I can remember."

"She actually began to hold hands with you and never saw you before! The brass of the creature! The designing, brazen animal!"

This turn a little startled Mr. Krukirk. He stiffened himself uneasily in his chair.

His sister-in-law was speechless for a few seconds and then her manner underwent a transmutation, wherewith her indignation faded into something softer and revealed itself in her voice as a caressing pity. She put forth her hand and took her brother-in-law's in her own.

"You're just like poor Ralph was," she said. "You poor man! Think of the designing wretch. . . You need someone to keep such people away from you. Poor man; you need a woman, and a—"

Mr. Krukirk jumped out of his chair suddenly and wrenched his hand from her grasp. For a bitter moment he fixed her with his wild wide eyes. She half rose out of her sitting position, and this movement shocked him from the static. He looked a second about him with a manner of distraction, and then ran to

the door. He spoke no words of any sort. He broke into a little trot in the corridor and slammed the house door behind him, catching as he did so the clipped sound of a voice calling his name.

But the street brought back no return of his equanimity. The crowds of people on the street impressed him with a singular fear. Particularly the women looked at him. Why on earth had he purchased these ridiculous clothes? He was sixty years old—older in fact, for he felt older. The air was more than a trifle chilly. . .

A beautiful thought came into his mind and suddenly expanded like some warm quick tropical blossom. He fondled it only a moment and then determined at once to act upon it. Perhaps, if he would go immediately and make arrangements, he could be enrolled before night-fall. There were often waiting lists at such places, but with money one can overcome many obstacles.

He signaled for a taxi. A green and yellow-striped thing approached, and the driver, noting that his passenger looked somewhat debilitated, jumped out and held open the door. The old gentleman stepped in and sank back among the cushions with a contented sigh.

"Where to, sir?" asked the driver.

He did not know any address. He didn't know any specific institution. But anyone would offer him a haven.

"Take me," he said, "to an Old Men's Home!"



A MAN who does not think is tiresome, but a woman who does not think is usually pretty.



TO praise her friends to a woman is almost as bad as to criticize his friends to a man.



YESTERDAY

By Clyde Criswell

A YEAR ago to-day, at this hour, the studio was full of sunshine and laughing girls and youths. The air was fragrant with perfumes and the odours of wine and cigarettes. The windows were open, and Spring leaned upon the sill and smiled in at us.

I sat upon the old divan, with its cloth-of-gold from enchanted Baghdad, and a girl's head was upon my knees. She had eyes blacker than black, hair more mysterious than deep shadow, and a mouth like a dreaming flower.

Someone plucked gay little strains upon a mandolin, a girl sang a snatch of song, and from down the street came the lilt of a hurdy-gurdy. It was truly Gypsyland—which is Youth—which is Springtime—which is Love.

To-day I am alone in the studio, which is stripped of its rugs, its hangings, its furniture. Upon the wall

where a painted Bacchante was wont to disport herself in mad abandon, gapes a huge hole the canvas had concealed. Gone are the gay—and shocking—French and German prints, the hanging palettes. Gone is the crowd with its chatter, its accompaniment of little tinkles of tune, the perfumes of the girls, the odours of wine and of cigarettes. The window is closed, for outside it is raining, slowly and drearily, a rain of tears. In the center of the dusty floor is a crimson mask that has escaped packing. I close my eyes, for a moment, and my heart weeps for the rosy hours that may return no more.

This is the end of Gypsyland—of Youth—of Springtime—of Love.

And the girl, whose head, so lovely, had lain upon my knees? . . . I remember the refrain of Villon's saddest lyric, and I repeat to myself in a whisper, "*Ou sont les neiges d'antan?*"



THE STARS ARE COLORED BLOSSOMS

By Muna Lee

THE stars are colored blossoms on a storm-shaken tree,
The moon a wanton shepherdess that wanders apart.
Night spreads out before us like a darkly gleaming sea,
And this glamour of the moonlight is a thing to shake the heart.

I cannot flee beyond you: you are waiting when I come,
Companion of the far white moon, comrade of the dew.
I shiver in the moonlight—though my lips are sealed and dumb,
My heart is torn asunder with the love and fear of you.



LE MIRACLE DE LA FORÊT

By Marguerite Berthet

EN ce temps-là, un pauvre charpentier, sa femme et son petit nouveau-né durent quitter leur logis et s'en aller à l'aventure, car leur propriétaire, qui était un vieil avaré, ne voulait pas de petits enfants dans son immeuble.

Ils errèrent longtemps, sans abri. Les gens du pays avaient le cœur dur; les voyant si pauvres, les uns craignaient qu'ils ne payassent pas leur loyer, les autres avaient peur d'eux. Le charpentier offrait en vain ses services: les maisons étaient bâties, et solides, et on n'allait pas, au commencement de l'hiver, se mettre à en construire d'autres.

— Fais-moi donc une potence, dit par dérision le seigneur du lieu, afin que j'aie le plaisir de t'y pendre le premier.

La femme savait coudre et filer, mais à voir ses pauvres nippes, les belles dames n'auraient jamais consenti à la laisser entrer, même dans leur cuisine. Ils s'éloignèrent donc du pays.

Après de dures marches et des haltes peu reposantes, ils arrivèrent à l'entrée d'une forêt.

La Forêt était silencieuse et triste, car les Fleurs, voyant le Soleil descendre toujours plus bas et les nuits s'allonger, avaient cru à la mort de la Terre, et s'étaient laissées mourir; et les Oiseaux s'en étaient allés, cherchant les fruits et les graines, et se demandant ce qu'était devenu le Soleil.

Cependant, le Charpentier, devant la Forêt, eut un mouvement de joie.

— Si tu veux, dit-il à sa compagne, nous entrerons dans la forêt. Je t'y bâtirai une cabane; car les bêtes ne sont pas plus méchantes que les hommes, et les arbres me connaissent.

— Où tu iras, j'irai, dit la Femme.

Et elle sourit à l'Enfant, bien enveloppé dans tout ce qu'elle avait trouvé de plus chaud. Et, pendant ce temps, le petit enfant dormait tranquillement, mais il ne souriait pas.

Quand les Sapins virent arriver le Charpentier, la Femme et l'Enfant, ils dirent:

— Etendons nos branches pour les abriter, et laissons tomber nos feuilles sèches pour qu'ils ne se mouillent pas en traversant la forêt.

La Femme pensa:

— Je suis lasse et voudrais bien décharger mes bras un instant. Mais la terre est dure et humide.

Alors, les Mousses:

— Prête-nous l'Enfant; nous lui ferons un nid bien douillet et bien chaud.

Et la Femme confia le petit Enfant aux Mousses.

Le Charpentier regardait la Forêt, et songeait:

— Comment les nourrirai-je, car voici l'hiver, et il n'y a plus rien?

Mais les Châtaigniers et les Hêtres secouèrent leurs branches, et il en tomba une pluie de châtaignes et de faines, et ils purent se nourrir.

Ils vécurent donc dans la Forêt. Cependant l'enfant dormait tranquillement, mais il ne souriait pas.

La Femme dit:

— Cette forêt est triste, parce qu'il n'y a plus ni Oiseaux, ni Fleurs.

Le Gui l'entendit et il parla au chêne:

— Frère, fais-moi monter sur tes épaules, car je suis petit, et les Oiseaux ne voient point mes baies blanches qu'ils aiment.

Et le Chêne prit le Gui et le plaça

sur sa plus haute branche. Alors, des volées d'oiseaux arrivèrent de tous côtés et se mirent à pépier gaîment.

Dans l'herbe, l'Hellébore restait cachée. Elle n'avait point voulu mourir, car elle ne croyait pas à la mort de la terre; mais les autres l'avaient raillée et traitée d'insensée.

Et l'Hellébore songea:

— Me voici seule, et je ne leur sers à rien. Si seulement ma fleur était moins laide, peut-être l'Enfant se plairait-il à la regarder, et son sourire réjouirait la forêt.

Alors quelque chose d'extraordinaire se passa. Le fleur de l'Hellébore grandit, grandit, et se tient de rose et de blanc, comme le visage de l'enfant. Et l'Enfant la regarda et sourit.

Au sourire de l'Enfant, toute la Forêt s'illumina. Et un Chant d'allégresse retentit, Voix des oiseaux ou voix des Esprits célestes, et ce chant disait:

— Noël! Noël! Ecoutez la bonne nouvelle! Le Soleil n'est pas mort, le soleil revient! le soleil revient!

Et une Voix qui dominait les autres dit:

—Le Soleil revient au ciel, et la Bonté doit refleurir au cœur des Hommes, puis-qu'elle est vivant au cœur de la Forêt.

Et la Voix dit au Sapin:

—Toi qui sus abriter l'Enfant, tu auras part à mon Noël: les enfants te fêteront et chanteront en dansant autour de toi.

Et Elle dit aux Arbres:

— Parce que vous avez nourri l'Enfant et sa Mère, vous aurez part à mon Noël: Toi, chêne, tu seras la Bûche, et toi, Hêtre, tu seras le Sabot où se cachent les choses merveilleuses; et toi, Châtaigner, tu seras l'âme des longues veillées, où les enfants écoutent, bouche-bée, les contes des bonnes grand'mères, tandis que les marrons craquent et se dorent sous la cendre.

Et la Voix dit aux Mousses et au Gui:

— Et vous aussi, Mousses, et toi aussi, Gui, vous aurez part à mon Noël: vous ornerez la maison et la chambre, afin que la Famille se réjouisse et dise. "Voici l'An Neuf" et ne croie plus à la mort de la Terre.

Et toi, Hellébore, tu seras la fleur qui fleurit contre toute espérance, parce que tu as eu foi au renouveau, parce que tu t'es épanouie en beauté, afin que l'Enfant sourie et que la Forêt se console. Tu fleuriras tous les ans comme ce jour; tu seras la Rose de Noël.

Alors la Voix se tut.

—Et nous? dirent, chagrins, les petits Oiseaux.

— Réjouissez-vous, mes mignons, fit alors la Femme. Vous êtes les Messagers de la Bonne Nouvelle: allez, allez! dites partout: "Noël! Noël! Le Soleil n'est pas mort! Le Soleil revient au Ciel, et la Bonté va refleurir au Cœur des Hommes!"



ANY AFTERNOON

By John Hamilton

I CRUSH my sister's large, lucent pearls between my fingers because I like their soft tingle as they crack.

I drive the peacocks into the kennels because I like the sound of the dogs tearing their resplendent plumage.

I speak cruel words to my lady because I like to hear her sob.



STUPIDITY AS A FINE ART

By George Jean Nathan

THE stupidity of the native professional stage has, in the period elapsed since last I lectured in this quarter, attained to a splendour so grand and unmistakable that one opens one's mouth in dazzled awe before the very majesty of the thing. It is stupidity not of a mean and lowly order, but stupidity brought to its highest point of perfection, stupidity so full-blown and fascinating as to betoken something akin almost to genius.

It takes brains to be so stupid as this—brains, imagination and courage. For the popular notion that any idiot can achieve such drivellings as are current in our theaters is, of course, absurd. The thing calls for experience, for training, for technique. It took a genius like Brahms to compose a violin concerto so impossibly stupid that it could move a Joachim to ribald mirth. It took a genius like Hauptmann to achieve the empurpled stupidities of "The Bow of Odysseus." Little men and little minds may bore the yokelry in little ways, but it is given only to men of superlative talent to produce in the cognoscenti the true *æsthetik* of a supreme and soul-satisfying dumps. When a George V. Hobart writes a "Moonlight Mary," an audience merely shuts up and goes to sleep. But when a Shakespeare writes a "Henry VIII," the world sits up on its haunches enchanted and besparkled by its *ennuis*, and chatters and chronicles about the phenomenon years on without end and makes of its boredom a proscenium and literary *cause célèbre*.

And so, lightly to pass over the contemporaneous inanity of the local stage and become flippant in its pres-

ence is to be at once maudlin and unjust. Great stupidity is vastly more noteworthy, more epoch-making, than mere great brilliance. The indiscretions of Napoleon, not the discretions of Blücher, turned the tide at Waterloo and changed the history of the world. The thick stupidity of the dairymaids at Berkeley, more than the vivid intelligence of Edward Jenner, was responsible for the giving to the world of medicine of vaccination. It was the dark stupidity of the actors who first did Ibsen in the Anglo-Saxon countries (certainly not the luminosity of Ibsen's scripts) that helped these communities misunderstand the dramatist sufficiently to guarantee him a measure of popular life in the English-speaking theater and so assist that theater, thus left-handedly, to its betterment.

The stupidity of our theater at the present time, with but little qualification, is of an excellence so signal and arresting that it is certain to reawaken the latent interest in the playhouse. By virtue of its very astounding magnitude it is certain to attract again to the theater such erstwhile rebels as, exasperated by merely mediocre plays and merely mediocre mummering, until now have remained steadfastly away. This intelligent element in the community must assuredly be tempted by the current complete idiocies that strut our stages, just as one's curiosity and interest are more deeply piqued in watching the imbecile actions of the inmates of an insane asylum than (as with merely mediocre plays) in watching the comparatively sane actions of the inmates of an Old Soldiers' Home.

Undiluted stupidity is ever a more

interesting spectacle than diluted sapience, for the same reason that a girl of sixteen is more interesting than a woman of twenty-seven. One is new, refreshing, artless, naïve almost to the point of loveliness; the other is like trying to sit through a Belasco play for a second time. An ignorant negro is certainly more amusing than an educated negro. A drum corps sounds better than a café trio of mandolin, piano and flute. A novel on life in the harem written by an old maid living in Brooklyn is louder amusement than one written by some Turkish Harold Bell Wright. And just so must the supreme stupidities of the theater entertain our better element of theatergoers where the diluted stupidities failed. . . . Bismarck tossed aside Marcus Aurelius to read "Die Familie Buchholz"!

As a specimen of the noteworthy nonesuchs that have been exhibited lately at two dollars the head upon the municipal platforms, let us first engage "The Flame," by Mr. Richard Walton Tully, and study precisely what happens during the course of the evening.

The scene of this opus is laid somewhere in Central America. When the curtain goes up, we discern a maiden hight Maya, whose face and arms are smeared with brown paint and who, by way of being in character, talks like a Dolly Sister. Maya, it appears, is the jilted lady-love of Geronimo Zabina, a revolutionist who has been educated in an American university and who, accordingly, wears a fancy hat-band. Geronimo Zabina presently loves Pamela Cabot, a blonde beauty who has come down on a yacht with an American multi-millionaire desirous of bringing peace to the stewing land. But the Cabot imperiously rejects the proposal of Geronimo Zabina and Geronimo Zabina, with a sour snicker that promises some sardouing in the near future, makes sneeringly off. The Cabot has meantime set eye on one Wayne Putnam, a young Americano in glistening puttees, whom she has not seen in years and, following the advice of Maya, who lives in a deep well con-

secrated to the sun god, decides to run afoul of her society mother's wish and go off to the mountains with the young gringo as his wife. This ends the first act.

The second act brings news that the Cabot is soon to have a baby and Maya, appearing mysteriously in a pale green light, implores the young wife to have the baby even if Cabot, *mère*, urges to the contrary. Putnam's life is now threatened by a voodoo doctor in the employ of Geronimo Zabina, but he is prevented from smoking the poisoned tobacco which has been set out for him by the sudden extinguishing of the lights in his house. During the period of darkness he departs, revolver in hand, and a negro servant named Jefferson Clay surreptitiously partakes of the tobacco and meets with instant death. Don Benito Garvanza, a second revolutionist, approaches now and, upon Putnam's reappearance, demands the money he has set aside to pay off his workmen. Then, this catastrophe over, Geronimo Zabina again sneaks upon the scene, casts a spell upon Maya, who has been hiding behind a chair, and makes off with the erstwhile Cabot. Screaming, he drags the fair one by night to "the green jungle of the Goat Without Any Horns" (so is it described upon the program) and prepares there to Dumas fils her. A great storm suddenly comes up, however, and Geronimo Zabina totters off, leaving the fair one lying on the floor.

The last act reveals Putnam and his bride (who was saved from the storm by the irrepressible Maya) once again in Geronimo's toils. Geronimo offers the lovely one her husband's life if she will but surrender her proud body to him. But this the lady declines to do and the villain orders that both be shot by his henchmen. "I will give you five minutes' grace to say your good-byes," snaps the cur, turning on his heel. The Cabot discovers now that the old padre, Fernando, who these many years has been in charge of the local tabernacle, is none other than her own long lost father. Geronimo, also learning this,

has Fernando hauled off-stage and whopped. Putnam and his bride are resigned to die. When—appears the ever timely Maya up from the bottom of the well! "I will save you," cries Maya. And, while the villainous Geronimo Zabina's back is turned, she leads the young folks down into the well to safety and presents them with a baby which she found in the green jungle.

This stunning, if somewhat subtle, *conte* is interspersed in the telling with several presumably atmospheric dances on the part of ladies in opalescent chemises and drawers, dances of the familiar species which put one in mind of a stout woman attempting to wriggle herself into a small-size corset; opportune sightings in the harbour of an American battleship on the several occasions when the bandits have the hero at bay; and much pounding on tomtoms. A large company of bad actors performs the play with appropriate inadequateness.

A second specimen: "The Man Who Came Back," by Mr. Jules Eckert Goodman out of a periodical parable. At eight-thirty, an actor playing a New York millionaire bids his dissolute son not again to darken the portals of his mansion until such a time as he has proved his worth. At nine-thirty, the dissolute son is carrying on with a *chanteuse* in a San Francisco cabaret. He suggests that she become his mistress, but the lady shrinks from him in righteous wrath—"So! It was *that* you meant when you made love to me and led me to believe you respected me and desired to make me your wife!"—and, agents of the dissolute young man's father heaving at this juncture upon the platform, the young man is shanghaied and put aboard a steamer bound for China. There, in an opium dive, an half-hour later we find him. And, too, in a dark corner, the *chanteuse*. They come face to face. "You!" Then thus the lady: "Yes, I! I was determined to get even with you. Look at me! I've smoked opium and soaked myself in strong liquor and sunk to

the lowest depths of degradation. I've become the most notorious, most depraved white woman in all of China. But—there is *one* thing I have kept, *one* thing that I have never defiled!" The young man grasps the edge of the table. "And that is—?"

"My *virtue*," booms the angel.

The young man, recalling Samuel French's Select List of Plays, now grabs the remarkable one passionately to him, proposes that they get married and fight it out side by side, and—fifteen minutes later—we glimpse the couple in their home in Honolulu. Comes news that the young man's father is dying, that the young man must make his choice between going to the bedside or remaining with his wife. The latter overhears and, recalling "David Garrick," pretends she has resumed the opium habit in order to disgust her beloved and drive him from her. . . . And so on until the conventional eleven o'clock lancers with everyone bowing low to everyone else.

As Exhibit C we have "Somebody's Luggage," by the Messrs. Mark Swan and F. J. Randall, disclosing Mr. James T. Powers in the fat part. Mr. Powers belongs to the now distant theatrical day when any actor was regarded as a comedian if he appeared on the stage wearing one red sock and one green sock. His methods are uniformly suggestive of the musical-comedy era when the grand entrance of the stellar *comique* was brought about by having the entire chorus line up facing L 3 and singing "Hail, Hail, To The Shah," and then having the stellar *comique* come on from R 1. Mr. Powers' comedic technique consists in extracting laughter not from his lines, but from movements of his hinter anatomy accompanying the lines. The farce in which the gentleman appears has to do with the epic of mixed-up baggage and consequent mixing up of identities. The humour relies almost entirely upon simulated sea-sickness and intoxication, a whiskey flask fastened to the trousers' pocket with a chain, sudden collisions

with persons walking backward, detachable cuffs, and a top hat that falls down over Mr. Powers' eyes.

Still another *morceau* is "A Pair of Queens," by the Messrs. Hauerbach, Brown and Lewis, in which the usual philandering benedick is followed to his domicile by the usual gay hussy of his nocturnal revel and in which he is compelled to hide alternately under the piano and in the window-seat until matters are explained to the satisfaction of his irate spouse. And still another is "A Little Bit of Fluff," a British farce long, long since departed to that storehouse bourne whence no play returns—unless Mr. William A. Brady happens to need scenery for a new production. And still another is "Fast and Grow Fat," by Mr. George Broadhurst from a story by Mr. Frank R. Adams. The Adams, as readers of this magazine know, is an amusing fellow. A person so lacking in humour as not to have laughed himself into cramps at Adams' essay on "Rum" would be one to laugh at the jokes in a libretto by Edgar Smith. Mr. Broadhurst, too, has enjoyed a somewhat greater aptitude for farce than for dramatic writing. Yet his effort in this instance is not a spruce one. The farcical effects are ever strained; of Hopwood subtlety, wit or even broad slapstick humour there is none. The fundamental notion of the affair is a ground abounding in potential satire and jocosity, but these have not been realized, even remotely.

"One should," wrote David de La Gamme, "accept everything—yellow trees, Venices floating in mist, seas pale blue striated with gold, coats blacker than ink—everything except imitations of imitations." However much above the average obtaining currently in the local playhouses, therefore, "Mr. Lazarus" (O'Higgins and Ford) may be, however much one may otherwise be pleasantly persuaded by it, the interest is bound in considerable measure to slouch. What we plumb here, in the fable of the mysterious stranger whose kindly spirit warms

again a household grown chill and bitter, is an imitation of Edith Ellis imitating Charles Rann Kennedy imitating Jerome K. Jerome imitating Robert Ganthony imitating Alfred Tennyson. True, the present authors have now and then threaded their spinning of the story with a show of humour and in at least one scene—a scene between two young lovers that is completely relieved of all banality since the mush conventional to such a scene is in this instance whispered inaudibly by the protagonists and reflected merely in their faces—have managed with a happy hand, yet the fabric of the play remains at all times too persistently familiar to rekindle the eye. The exhibit contains material enough for a *vaudeville*, but scarcely sufficient for a four-act play. The performance of the piece is very good indeed, particularly in the instance of that deft farceur, Mr. Henry Dixey.

Mr. Charles Dillingham opened his second season at the Hippodrome with newspaper advertisements twice as large as last season and therefore achieved a correspondingly doubled artistic success. A meticulous scrutiny of the entertainment provided in the Hippodrome this season, however, discloses the fact that it is considerably below the standard of last season's presentation which, in turn, was considerably below the standard of the exhibitions previously housed in the place under the auspices of the Messrs. Shubert. It would appear that the acts revealed this year were selected for their age rather than their quality. Powers' elephants once again play baseball and seem to enjoy it, thus proving that animals are not as intelligent as some are wont to imagine; there is the old skeleton dance before the black velvet drop curtain, familiar to those who twenty years ago attended the Hanlons' "Fantasma" and Charles Yale's "The Evil Eye"; there is the old *vaudeville* hall act of the piano played while suspended in mid-air, the patriotic song with soldiers and sailors grouped

behind the singer, the Japanese scene with the chorus girls making their entrance through a number of paper screens (favourite business of the old John J. McNally music shows), and the minstrel finale with its medley of "Suwanee River," "Old Ketnucky Home," and other ballads of yesteryear. There is also a poorly managed ballet in which the Pavlova's skill is lost and a repetition of the ice-skating tricks of last year. Next season, should Mr. Dillingham capture the services of some troupe of trained dogs that has outlived its amusement usefulness in the hinterland vaudevilles and coincidentally increase his newspaper advertisements to a threefold avoirdupois, he will doubtless achieve an artistic success three times as great as he achieved this season.

Though I am not one given to an admiration for pantomime, since a pantomime, however winning and lovely, seems always to me like looking for a proportionate space of time at a very beautiful woman whom one doesn't know and cannot speak to, Mr. Winthrop Ames' importation of the well-known mute drama "L'Enfant Prodigue" comes as a tonic in this day of theatrical starvation. Of the pantomime itself, it is needless to write: you doubtless know its content intimately from a vision of it on Continental stages or from its previous uncurtainings in the republic. But of the staging there is a word to tell. Saving a note of warmth that seems to be missing, Ames has done beautifully by the gesture piece. Against his green-gray-blue home of the Pierrots and his orchid lair of Phrynette, the action is silhouetted with the sharpness of a blonde in Buenos Ayres. The orchestral accompaniment is shrewdly managed; the pace of the performance well timed. It is possible that Mr. Ames might have won a more novel and effective setting for his pantomime had he set his scenes upon a so-called interior stage, giving the performance thus a Punch and Judy semblance. But, even so, his little eve-

ning provides a peaceful and very amiable relief from the loud stupidities in the theaters to the port and starboard.

While indulging in such retrospective suggestions, it may be not amiss incidentally to speculate why it did not occur to Mr. Hopkins, when producing "The Happy Ending," to have some such composer as Victor Herbert or Jean Gilbert write the orchestral accompaniment to the play in place of the neo-Tschaikowsky he selected. A play which sought to sing of death as a light and comic adventure, for its best theatrical effect called assuredly for a light, jolly accompaniment—even ragtime were not inappropriate—in place of the pompous leaden quasi-Russian measures which were bequeathed it. As it was, the accompaniment supplied by Eugene Haile went as far toward robbing the play of its proper effect as did the authors. However good the play might have been, the spectacles showing death as a gay life in a gay, singing world would have been deleted of all emotional effect by the megriums of the orchestral score. What such scenes needed were gay tunes to set boots tapping and hearts dancing, tunes as lively and playful as so many kittens—certainly not, as was the sad case, scattered motifs extracted alone for their pessimism from such Cossack opera as "Opritchnnyk" and "Jevgenjie Onegrin."

Mr. D. W. Griffith's latest motion-picture (misnamed a motion-picture probably by virtue of the throwing onto the screen every once in a while of a bit of a moving picture to rest the audience's eyes from the reading of the multifarious lengthy cullings from the set of the Encyclopedia Britannica which must have fallen into Mr. Griffith's hands and made a deep impression upon him) is called "Intolerance." Although a thing of undoubted interest to moving-picture folk and very young school children, the exhibition is one not particularly suited to capture the attention of the more tutored. The lengthy legends gravely informing the

audience via the screen of matters intimately familiar to all Sunday-school youngsters between the ages of seven and ten, the sonorous scholastic air with which the amateur film preacher negotiates, the imposing quotation of countless punditic tomes whence data has been derived, the austere couched statistics flashed upon the sheet giving the population, sewer-mileage, omnibus sights, Grants' Tombs and what-nots of ancient Babylon and the showing then, just as one's curiosity is all worked up, of a mere houri rolling her eyes at the camera—these are among the things vouchsafed with which to smack one's humours.

Griffith made a very good job indeed of his previous picture, "The Birth of a Nation." And in this, his latest effort, he again reveals his unmistakable ability to direct great crowds of supernumeraries and his skill in obtaining impressive photographic perspectives. And he has, in that portion of his film picturing the fall of Babylon, worked deftly—though not especially more so than did the director of "Cabiria" with the same sort of material. But the case of Griffith is at one with the case of Belasco. A director and producer of excellence when content to remain within his limitations, his ambitions have been too great for his capabilities. He is a showman, not a student nor a scholar. A little reading has proved dangerous to him. It is quite as out of point for Mr. Griffith to aspire to the estate of a philosopher as it would be for me to aspire to the estate of a motion-picture director. It is a sad pity to see a man of his talent in his elected field spoiling himself out of malapropos desire to be looked on as an intellectual.

As Mr. John D. Williams and I left the chamber of the Griffith exhibition, our egress was impaired by a gentleman who sprayed us with his salivary enthusiasms. "Think of it!" cried the fellow, "Twenty thousand people used in the picture!"

"But," inquired Williams, "what do they do?"

"What do they do? What do they

do!" gesticulated the ebullient one not without a poorly concealed manifestation of disgust over our opacity; "*what do they do!* They er—er—they er—they—well, they er—"

The fellow was lost in stutter. For the life of him, he couldn't say. And there you have the clearest estimate of "Intolerance" and the public's view of it: mere empty size and the native admiration for anything, no matter how spurious, only so long as it is at least twenty-two stories high and has cost a million dollars.

It is claimed by many of my colleagues that Mr. George Arliss is America's most expert character actor. And indeed, by this time, he should be. For he has been acting that character for longer than I am able to remember. True enough, now the character has been called Zakkuri ("The Darling of the Gods"), now the devil and now Disraeli (in the plays so titled), and now again Paganini (in an exhibit of the same name by Mr. Edward Knoblauch), but whatever the designation, Mr. Arliss' interpretation of the character is ever the same. The slit-eyed peer, the nervous hands, the velvet tread, the Ralph Herz delivery—they never vary. The difference between Mr. Arliss' Disraeli and Paganini, as the difference between his Zakkuri and his devil, is merely a matter of make-up. A pleasant actor, the man is; but a versatile actor, or an actor possessed of very real skill, certainly not. The Knoblauch play in which Mr. Arliss is appearing is one of the stereotyped proscenium excursions into the life of a late man of genius—the usual pot-boiler in which the man of genius is revealed as a somewhat sad and cynic soul who spent his life imitating Richard Le Gallienne and reuniting estranged young lovers. What has happened to Knoblauch? He still writes with the old charm—there are not many young men working for the English-speaking stage in this respect to excel him—but his latterly labours have been otherwise commonplace and empty.

Of "Pollyanna," extracted from the best-seller of the name, I wrote at some length last season. A second vision brings no hidden merit to the surface. A mushy business, sedulously fervent and catering principally to such persons as believe that if one but remembers to smile one will never have stomach-ache, the play is representative of the native school of *Pêche Melba* drama at its juiciest. The exhibition is probably somewhat too elemental for children, but will doubtless appeal to the Broadway playgoer.

In "Nothing But the Truth," by Mr. James Montgomery from a fiction by Mr. Frederick Isham, we survey again the story of the person who sets out for a period to tell the naked truth and the unpleasant complications into which the telling projects him: a story as familiar as Chopin's Cradle Song or the expurgated portions of "In the Luxembourg Gardens"—a story, in short, that has been with us from W. S. Gilbert to George Paston and W. B. Maxwell.

The current music shows need not detain us. "The Girl from Brazil" contains two good-looking girls; "The Amber Empress," one; and "Flora Bella," none. For such as are interested in petty details, it may be recorded that the score of the latter is the best. The librettos are of an equal inertia. In "The Girl from Brazil" we engage the girl who is directed to marry for money but who in the end yet grabs the poor man of her heart. In "Flora Bella," the man who fails to recognize his wife at a masked ball and falls in love with her. In "The Amber Empress"—but, frankly, I do not know. From what I could make out, the to-do concerned some American tourists in Venice who fell in love with somebody or other and talked excitedly about something connected with the business until it was time to get married and go home. . . . Alas that "The Follies" is gone from our midst. In the words of Huneker—

But let us keep confidential the words of the roguish James and pass decorously to "Mister Antonio," made

by Mr. Booth Tarkington for the person of Mr. Otis Skinner. This Skinner, like Arliss, is a one-part actor. His characterizations vary only in the tint of grease-paint with which he colours his face. The difference between his Anthony Bellchamber, English actor, and his Antonio Camaradonio, Italian organ-grinder, for example, is but the difference between Hess' No. 9 (healthy pink) and a grayish wig and Hess' No. 12 (healthy olive) and a black wig. Otherwise, all is as one: the grand flourish of gesture, the cocking of the eye, the slap upon the expanded chest, the elevation of the right shoulder, the hat upon one ear, the running of the scale with the speaking voice, the pose debonnaire, the backs of the palms supporting the chin and the smiling of the whimsical smile. Whatever the role, the same bag of tricks. Mr. Skinner never gets deeper into the soul of the character he is playing than that soul is revealed to him in his dressing-room mirror. His Italian organ-grinder in the Tarkington play is less an Italian organ-grinder than a picture of Maurice Farkoa in a yellow sash.

For a writer of Tarkington's talent, this play is a surprisingly mean thing, uninspired, ill-written, shabby. The hurdy-gurdy man who goes to the small town where a servant girl is wrongly accused of adultery by the sort of puritans who never fight fair because they always think below the belt—and who champions the maiden and carts her off as wife, is a sickly imagining.

* * * *

Another such month of theatergoing and I write my valedictory. The business of wasting precious years on such stuffs as the native stage offers is, after all, a pastime for younger men, men still in that proud and important flush of vacuity where a stale *artiste*, crammed to the nozzle with useless technique, is a thing to write of and rapture over, when all the time some young Ann Pennington is around the corner on the stage of the New Amsterdam dancing a hoochee-coochee.

PROFESSORS AT THE BAT

By H. L. Mencken

I

ON page 41 of his treatise "On the Art of Writing" (*Putnam*), Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, M.A., King Edward VII Professor of English Literature in Cambridge University, makes a thumping ass of himself—the best of all proofs, perhaps, of his professorial fitness and dignity—a devastating answer to those prudes who railed against the appointment of a second-rate novelist to so august a chair. "A professor of Greek," said Dr. Johnson, "is one who knows little Greek, and nothing else." The official pundits, God knows, show folly enough in their own gardens; when they cross the fence they debauch the fancy with the ferocity of their imbecility. Here the professor of English literature takes a hack at pathology. Observe:

I was waiting the other day, in a doctor's anteroom, and picked up one of those books—it was a work on pathology—so thoughtfully left lying in such places. . . . I found myself engaged in following the antics of certain bacilli generically described as "antibodies." I do not accuse the author (who seemed to be a learned man) of having invented the abominable term; apparently it passed current among physiologists and he had accepted it for honest coin. I found it, later on, in Webster's invaluable dictionary: Etymology, "body" (yours or mine), "anti," up against it; compound, "antibody," a noxious microbe.

I leave the joke to your own sapience. On second thoughts, I briefly explain it. It lies in good Sir Arthur's clownish assumption that "bacillus" and "antibody" are synonyms, that they mean the same thing. As a matter of fact, they mean two quite different things, for a bacillus is an alien (and usually hostile) invader of the organ-

ism, whereas an antibody is a substance formed in the blood to combat it, or, more precisely, to neutralize the toxins it so copiously spews forth. How the gifted sage managed to extract his preposterous etymology from Webster I can't imagine. Can it be that the last edition of old Noah actually defines an antibody as "a noxious microbe"? Nor can I imagine how so bald a howler passed unchallenged at Cambridge, where, in the midst of all the dons, there must surely be half a dozen educated men. Remember, this infantile bosh was spouted from the rostrum at a public and well-attended lecture, that it was repeated a few weeks later at a second lecture, that both lectures were reported in the newspapers, that they caused no little discussion, that the author (see his preface) carefully revised the manuscript, that the ensuing book was printed last year in England, that the antibodies guff eluded all the reviewers, that it is now reprinted unchanged in the United States, and that this is the first (and will probably be the last) discovery of it! . . .

Do I make a mountain out of a molehill, fatuously seeking to air my own bacteriological parts? By no means. I select this curious imbecility as no more than a salient example of what the book shows in general. It is, indeed, a fine specimen of professorial criticism at its worst—donkeyishly pedantic, labored in style and often extremely shaky in its facts. There is, of course, the characteristic and inevitable hymning of a neglected genius—the oldest of all devices for getting a name for originality and learning. In this case the hero is Sir Thomas Wyatt, lover of Anne Boleyn and chief con-

tributor to Tottel's Miscellany (1557). That Wyatt was a pioneer maker of English lyrics is known to every sophomore, but that he was a great poet it remained for Quiller-Couch to discover. Here is one of his songs, solemnly brought forward in proof:

Is it possible?
For to turn so oft;
To bring that lowest that was most aloft:
And to fall highest, yet to light soft?
Is it possible?

All is possible!
Whoso list believe;
Trust therefore first, and after preve;
As men wed ladies by license and leave,
All is possible!

This masterpiece is cited, not only to demonstrate Wyatt's genius, but to help prove the sagacious knight's main thesis in his book, to wit, that English literature is not Anglo-Saxon in origin, but Latin. From end to end he harps upon it, and from end to end all he manages to show is that English literature, like all other European literature, was given a tremendous impetus by the Renaissance. When he argues that English poetry, as we know it today, stems clearly from the Italian through Wyatt and the other Sixteenth Century imitators of Petrarch, he throws overboard the whole of early English balladry, and reads such men as Blake, Kipling, Rossetti, Masfield and even Tennyson out of meeting as English poets. The dangers of riding a hobby could be made no plainer. His eye on mere forms, Quiller-Couch seems to forget spirit almost entirely—and now and then he even gets befogged as to forms. By the very same process of reasoning one might make a Latin of Klopstock, whose "Der Messias" was an imitation of Milton, who imitated Dante. It would be quite easy, indeed, to prove by the Cambridge doctor's syllogisms that German literature is not Germanic but Latin. His entire argument is fanciful and tortured. If that sort of criticism passes for profound at Cambridge, then it is no wonder that Cambridge did not

establish a chair of English literature until 1910.

In his manner, as in his matter, Quiller-Couch is strained and unconvincing. Plentifully begauded a book professedly devoted to the teaching of English composition one comes upon such specimens of high-school preciousness as this:

Bethink you how deeply Rome engraved itself on this island and its features. Bethink you that, as human nature is, no conquering race ever lived or could live—even in garrison—among a tributary one without begetting children on it. Bethink you yet further of Freeman's admission that in the wholesale (and quite hypothetical) general massacre, "the women doubtless would be largely spared." . . .

And so on, and so on. A book of unconscious humor all compact. A book whose substance, more than once, reduces its title to a charming absurdity. . . .

Another denizen of the academic shades, Prof. Fred Lewis Pattee, comes forward with a work of much more sense, but still one that exhibits a professor's habits of mind. It is called "A History of American Literature Since 1870" (*Century*), and it runs to nearly 500 pages of small print. What Prof. Pattee says of the authors he discusses is often perfectly sound and true, and sometimes it is original and penetrating, but in choosing candidates for discussion he follows school-room ideas of importance very closely, and so his work, despite a certain independence of judgment, is conventional and lopsided as criticism. He suggests a man making very creditable music on a fiddle defectively tuned. It is not the literature in being that most interests him, but that literature which is no more than a pale imitation of old artificialities, a thing of inane respectabilities—for example, the essays of Agnes Repplier and Paul Elmer More, the fiction of the New England spinster school. He gives several chapters to the poets, and pronounces verdicts upon such modest ones as Maurice Francis

Egan and Ina Donna Coolbrith—and then forgets Lizette Woodworth Reese altogether! He mentions E. S. Martin with respect and credits Brander Matthews with adding a “brilliant chapter to the sum of American criticism”—but the name of W. C. Brownell is not in his index! He has a word for Hamilton Wright Mabie, and another for Jeannette L. Gilder—but not one for James Huneker! He gives five whole pages to F. Marion Crawford, and many more to the dialect mongers, male and female, of the 90’s—and then passes over Dreiser without a line!

True enough, there is an excuse for some of these omissions in his preface. He says that he confines himself to “those authors who did their first distinctive work before 1892.” But he is constantly breaking through that rule. Frank Norris’ “McTeague” was not published until 1899. If it is worth discussing—and it undoubtedly is—then why isn’t “Sister Carrie,” which came less than a year later, worth discussing also? If Richard Harding Davis is fit meat for a solemn judgment, then what of Edith Wharton? If Owen Wister, Alice Hegan Rice and Robert W. Chambers are seriously to be listed among American novelists, then why not Mrs. Watts? . . . But let us not press the professor with too many such questions. After all, he was free to make his book as he pleased. You will find in it, in the midst of many timorous ifs and buts, some excellent valuations of such men as Howells, Lafcadio Hearn and Bret Harte. And you will find in it, too, some curious outbursts of college town smugness and nonsense—for example, in the pages on Frank Norris, with their characteristic confusion of representative art and moral purpose. . . . Altogether, a very creditable volume—for a professor. It lacks anything approaching true force; it shows no understanding whatever of the streams of national literature that now run; it is, in general, pallid and scholastic; but it at least shows a certain fluency and ingenuity within its limits, and it is not ill written.

II

In various other solemn tomes of the month one encounters strange and savoury doctrines. For example, in “The Truth About the Bible,” by Sidney C. Tapp (*Pub. by the author*), there is the doctrine that all the horrors of life are due to sex, and that any man who favors a pretty girl with a kiss is risking hell. I am old enough, alas, to begin reading such books, but not yet old enough to begin believing them. . . . In “From Doomsday to Kingdom Come” (*Small-Maynard*), Seymour Deming imitates Gerald Stanley Lee in style and Major-General Roosevelt in the voracity of his appetite for perunas. He has a ready gullet, it would seem, for all of them, from prohibition to vice crusading and from mothers’ pensions to the initiative and referendum—for all, that is, save preparedness. For this saving grace much thanks. I have observed the militia at their exercises and begin to lose stomach for world conquest. . . . In “Ventures in Worlds,” by Marian Cox (*Kennerly*), we are made privy to the news that Germany has been ruined by music. Fleeing from Europe when the war broke out, the author met Siegfried Wagner at Bayreuth, and found him drinking beer and eating white radishes. His conversation staggered her. “Since then,” she says, “I have placed the musicians, the militarists and the millionaires all together as the makers of our modern predatory civilization.” In another essay she argues against modern marriage on the ground that it forces man and wife to live together, and so takes the edge off their romance. They become, in fact, like fellow-boarders or partners in business, even like brother and sister, and thus their marriage grows incestuous. I use the fair essayist’s own word. She is lavish with her parts of speech and even more so with her heresies. A book to bounce you a bit. A headlong rush of ideas, some of them amusing. Tempo: *Vivacissimo con fuoco*.

III

The novels of the month show the usual badness. The best of them, "These Lynnekers," by J. D. Beresford (*Doran*), is immeasurably below the same author's "Early History of Jacob Stahl." The Lynnekers of the title are a provincial English family, respectable in blood and proud of the fact, and the tale concerns their fortunes during a period of twenty or more years. The father, cure of a stupid parish on the outskirts of a cathedral city, passes through the agonies of genteel indigence into the serenity of a somewhat empty old age, with a gallant death, albeit in bed, to glorify him in the end. The eldest son marries a fat girl of means and influence, and settles down as a minor canon. The second son contracts an alliance with a dubious widow considerably his senior. One of the daughters runs off with a neighboring carpenter, vastly scandalizing her snobbish brothers. The other daughter falls into acrid spinsterhood, consecrating herself to suspicion. The mother, after a financial transaction as questionable as Nora Helmer's, takes refuge in an amiable imbecility. There remains the youngest son, Richard, an odd one, what the biologists call a sport. Floored by Greek at school, he goes into a bank, attracts the attention of a City magnate, retires with a competence at twenty-seven, resists a bishop's efforts to make a parson of him, dallies with agnosticism in its milder forms, and passes from the scene as an amateur astronomer. This Richard is the central figure of the chronicle, and should be the most vivid of them all. Unluckily, Mr. Beresford makes him precisely the least vivid. One wonders, at the end, why so many persons of importance—e. g., a rich cousin, the City magnate and the bishop—should have been attracted to him so strongly, and aroused to such interest in the state of his fortunes and soul. We hear that they found him remarkable but we never find out why. As he is presented to us he never rises above a commonplace sort of clever-

ness; surely nothing that he ever actually says or does is of the slightest distinction. Even in detail Mr. Beresford contrives to make him incredible. For example, we are asked to believe (page 385) that after five years in the City of London he hasn't "got either a tail coat or a pot hat in the world." What nonsense is this? Has anarchy descended upon Threadneedle street? Have London financiers turned Goths and Huns? . . . Altogether, a third-rate novel, though by a novelist at the threshold of the first class. The war has played the devil with Britain's fictioneers. Not a single book worth talking about has come from them in two years. Wells, Bennett, Locke, Walpole, Chesterton, Snaith, Merrick, George, Kipling, Beerbohm, Moore, Galsworthy—one and all they show the strain. Even Conrad seems to be marking time.

The native novels are chiefly machine-made. "The Heritage of the Sioux," by B. M. Bower (*Little-Brown*), is the usual slap-stick melodrama of the cow country. "Cap'n Gid," by Elizabeth Lincoln Gould (*Penn*), is a boarding-house comedy. "Clover and Blue Grass," by Eliza Calvert Hall (*Little-Brown*), is a book of Kentucky short stories, partly in dialect, by an author cursed by the praise of General Roosevelt. "The Girl at Big Loon Post," by George Van Schaick (*Little-Brown*), is another of the endless romances of the Hudson Bay country, with the inevitable brave Englishman and the inevitable dusky heroine. "Chloe Malone," by Fannie Heaslip Lea (*Little-Brown*), is a Southern love story of the school of Henry Sydnor Harrison. The rest I spare you, jumping swiftly to "The Hausfrau Rampant" (*Doran*), for which E. V. Lucas, the maker of anthologies, stands sponsor. The book is made up of translated selections from Dr. Julius Stinde's series of German comic sketches, "Die Familie Buchholz," a work as familiar and as popular in Germany as the tales of Bret Harte and O. Henry used to be

in this country. It by no means belongs to the grand literature of Kaiserdom; it is not mentioned in Friedrich Kummer's "Deutsche Literaturgeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts," nor in the last edition of Gotthold Klee. But all the same there is some capital buffoonery in it, and I have snickered over Frau Buchholz since the days of my earliest struggles with the almost-impossible-to-learn-and-never-to-be-sufficiently-dashed German language. Mr. Lucas has got a good deal of this effective if somewhat behemothian humor into his book, though the effort to boil down four volumes to one naturally leads him into occasional snares, and every devotee of the original will probably seek in vain for some favorite scene. It is curious how little the excellent comic writing of Germany is known in England and America. We hear far too much about Treitschke, Eucken and other such owls, and far too little about such merry fellows as Otto Julius Bierbaum, Ludwig Thoma and Roda-Roda. Most of these literary scaramouches have revolved around Munich, and kept their arteries filled with its incomparable brews; its comic papers, enriched by their work, make *Life*, *Puck* and the rest of our barber-shop weeklies seem poor indeed. The dozen or more volumes of Bierbaum offer a rich mine to any translator who will explore them. His "Irrgarten der Liebe" (which had sold 50,000 copies at the time of his death in 1910) contains some of the best humorous verse I have ever encountered, and his prose tales and travel sketches are full of excellent stuff. The late Percival Pollard, whose "Masks and Minstrels of New Germany" (*Luce*) gives a good account of all these wags, formed the plan of translating the whole of the "Irrgarten," and employed me as a hack poet to help him. We had done no more than a dozen of the poems when Pollard's sudden death put an end to the enterprise. I nominate Louis Untermeyer and Franklin P. Adams as executors and assigns. They could do the job to perfection.

There remains "The Woman Gives," by Owen Johnson (*Little-Brown*), in which the old theme of redemption by woman's love appears in a Bohemian setting. The hero, Daniel Garford, is so floored by the discovery of his wife's infidelity that he changes his name to Dangerfield and takes to *vin rouge*. From this wallow he is dragged by the devotion of Inga Sonderson, a girl with black hair and a face as brown as an Indian's, and in the end he gets upon his legs again and becomes a famous artist. Inga, however, marries another man. The rest of the characters of the tale are rather conventional caricatures of the sort of jitney geniuses one meets in Greenwich Village, with a rough diamond, a mysterious Frenchman and other old friends added. These persons show little vitality; their stereotyped cavortings in the first half dozen chapters grow heavy and wearisome. The latter half of the story, in which Dangerfield and Inga come to grips, is vastly better written. It shows, indeed, some of the fine skill which Mr. Johnson got into his Lawrenceville stories—now almost put out of memory by his successive boob-shockers and best-sellers. One sheds a banal but none the less sincere tear upon the swift vulgarization of so many young writers of sound promise. Robert W. Chambers is the archetype of them; all his gaudy novels, stacked sky-high in the department stores between the talcum and the corset-covers, are not worth one of his early short stories. The cheap magazines snare them with gigantic offers, the book publishers merchant their work like soap, and that is the end of them.

IV

Of the books that remain, "The Book of the Dance," by Arnold Genthe (*Kernerley*), is the most intriguing, for it contains but a page and a quarter of text, and thus gives a holiday to my eyes. Nay, more than a holiday: a sweet massage—for its pages are filled with Mr. Genthe's excellent photographs of dancers, and some of them

are very charming damsels. Genuine action often appears in these pictures; the photographer has transfixed movement without losing it. Among the performers employed as models are Maud Allan, Isadora Duncan, Loie Fuller, Anna Pavlowa, Ruth St. Denis and Lady Constance Stewart-Richardson, the last-named rolling her eyes to the limit of physiological oscillation. A few of the ladies, their names politely withheld, appear in a state of virgin innocence. No doubt a special edition for the helplessly concupiscent will appear later, with every leg in an overall and the star-spangled banner draped around every middle. This is a chemically pure republic; the moral must be protected from their blushful imaginings.

Two other books, "The Memoirs of a Physician," by Vikenty Veressayev (*Knopf*), and "Impressions and Opinions," by Havelock Ellis (*Houghton-Mifflin*), I reserve for more extended notice later on. Dr. Ellis, in particular, deserves a whole article. He is a man of extraordinary industry, originality and versatility, and his five or six volumes upon the psychology of sex are the first in the English language to treat the vexed subject with resolute courage and comprehensive learning. It goes without saying that these books are under the ban of the professional pornophobes; they expose too mercilessly the pious nonsense of the current "sex hygiene" literature to go without challenge; every now and then some bookseller is jailed for keeping them in stock. But Dr. Ellis is by no means a narrow specialist. His volume on Spain is a delightful piece of writing; his study of dreams is as searching as the work of Freud; in addition he has edited two such widely different series of books as the Mermaid Series of old English dramatists and the Contemporary Science Series—each absolutely the best in its own field. His present volume is made up of extracts from his private day-book, and the variety of its contents shows the intellectual scope of the man. We are here introduced, indeed, to the rich stores of one of the

first intelligences of England; I hope to describe some of its achievements on a future day.

Three books of plays—"The Locust Flower and The Celibate," by Pauline Brooks Quinton (*Sherman-French*); "Duty and Other Irish Comedies," by Seumas O'Brien (*Little-Brown*), and "The Poor Little Rich Girl," by Eleanor Gates (*Arrow*). The last-named you have probably seen in the theatre; it was a great success a season or two ago. In book-form it is preceded by a foreword by my brother in the sacred sciences, George Jean Nathan, who says of it, and quite accurately, that it is "at once a work of genuine fancy and sound art." (The rest of the learned gentleman's remarks are by no means clear. Some of his snarls of speech, indeed, leave me quite squeezed. For example, ". . . the quality of fanciful imagination is of the catalogue no (or at best, small) part." Again:

As against the not unhollow symbolic strut and gasconade of such over-paeaned pieces as, let us for example say, "The Blue Bird" of Maeterlinck, so simple and unaffected a bit of stage writing as this—of school dramatic intrinsically the same—cajoles the more honest heart and satisfies more plausibly and fully those of us whose thumbs are ever being pulled professionally for a native stage less smeared with the snobberies of empty, albeit high-sounding, nomenclatures from overseas.

Our old *bierbruder*, the Henry James complex. I turn to the date of this inextricable fugue, and the mystery vanishes. It appears as February 8, 1916. On the evening of February 7, 1916, beginning at 11 P. M., Allah Council, No. 7, of the Knights of St. Stanislaus, held its annual oyster roast at the Café des Bozart. . . . Nevertheless, it would pay my eminent colleague, after cannibalism upon his own compositions, to pursue his reading seven pages further. "Follow the judicious," says K'ung Fû-tsze, "and learn to be like them." . . . The other play-books interest me less. In Miss Quinton's two pieces there is much preciousity and straining for effect. The Irish

comedies of Mr. O'Brien are in the manner of Lady Gregory's, and two of them, "Duty" and "Jurisprudence" are well done. In the latter, by the way, Mr. O'Brien makes bold use (page 44) of a word still waiting in the ante-room of polite English, to wit, *alright*. This word seems to be struggling hard to get in; I encounter it constantly in manuscripts, and one of the leading American novelists is very fond of it, though his publisher's proof-readers keep it out of his books. Will it become respectable? The analogy of *already*, which was two words, *al* and *redy* in Middle English, indicates that it will. As for me, however, I still sniff at it. It strikes me as clumsy, uncouth, too grossly New Yorkish. It carries with it something of the vague unpleasantness of *tho*, *thru* and the other one-legged abominations of the Simplified Spelling Board. It is a word for persons who have nothing to say, and who wish to say it as economically as possible. It is a harsh word, a mongrel word, a word without a soul. Let it be damned.

V

My report, in the September number, of a petition received from a fair reader in Syracuse, N. Y., to the effect that I give over the reviewing of current books, chiefly bad, and devote my space to literary essays of a more general and lofty character—this report has brought me many letters from estimable constituents, and their voice, in overwhelming majority, is in support of the Syracusean. The plan accords with my secret yearnings; I presented it, in fact, in an ingratiating manner; I shall adopt it as soon as the books now on my wharves are worked off. This will be about January 1, and the first monograph under the new dispensation will

be printed in the March number. The subject I reserve *in petto*. But it will have its roost, you may be sure, in the higher strata of beautiful letters, and its discussion will make for virtue and enlightenment at the domestic hearth.

Let this be sufficient warning to the publishers that I shall not consider myself bound, after January 1, to review the books they send to me. I may add a few brief notices to my discourse each month, but then again I may not. This "sufficient warning," of course, will never reach the Barabbases; no self-respecting publisher ever reads reviews; the business of clipping them and filing them, like that of distributing review copies, is intrusted to the janitor. Three times during the past year I have given formal notice that I do not review war books—that each new one reaching me goes into my hell-box unopened. In the August number I rehearsed this notice at great length. Also, I ventured the prophecy that no publisher would read it, and that I would receive at least thirty war books during the thirty days following its publication. The actual number was twenty-eight. My ashman, an intelligent Belgian refugee, has read them all. He reports that they have made him pro-German.

VI

Next month, *Deo volente*, a session with the poets. In the past I have dedicated the month of May to them, but this year they are too numerous and pressing to be put off. The output of poetry, indeed, seems to be augmented rather than decreased by the war. All other tribes of authors are a bit chastened, but the minnesingers whoop and burble as never before. Let us, then, spit on our hands and make ready for them.

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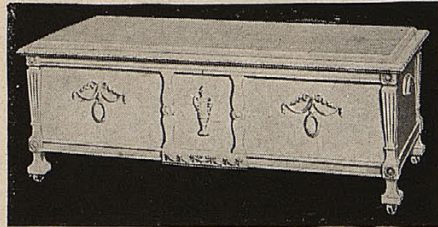
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